The Metrical Structure of Free Verse

PhD Thesis

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Abstract

The irregular undulations of the lexical stress patterns in English and German free verse seem to elude any attempts at controlling their structural variety. This elusiveness calls for metrical confinement through a theory that illuminates the rhythmic effects of variable accentual structures. Metre represents the abstract image of poetic rhythm. Its binary stress patterns utilize accentual isochrony and accentual diversity in order to produce temporal and, if possible, structural regularity. Thus, a stress-based theory of free verse metre becomes possible.

The metrical structure of free verse depends on the simultaneous co-operation of all metrically relevant factors. None of these factors is invariable; but their variability is restricted by their need to negotiate mutually the various possibilities of producing, in a concerted effort, the rhythmically best stress pattern. There are three different kinds of metrically relevant factors: while syntax is generally responsible for the delimitation of a metrical unit, lexical stress furnishes the accentual raw material, whose shape is, then, refined under the influence of metro-rhythmic idealization. These factors are, in addition to their interdependence, also conditioned by linear and semantic considerations, as well as by the various constraints of contextual suitability. For an ideal structural metre aims at variational continuity in that each metrical unit depends for its rhythmic effectiveness on the immediately preceding stress pattern and, at the same time, constitutes a metrical norm for the immediately following stress pattern.

The cognitive nature of structural metrics acknowledges the possibility of different rhythmic interpretations in the underlying test readings, if a metrical analysis fails to yield an unequivocal set of criteria for the establishment of a definitive stress structure. Free verse rhythm is, therefore, often governed by a metrical potential rather than by one irrefutable stress pattern. Embedded in a historical understanding of metrically irregular poetry and its justification, the above theory is employed in a comparative study of English and German free verse.

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Introduction

To write about the metrical structure of free verse is often considered an impossibility, because free verse does not adhere to any of the regular patterns by which metre is habitually characterized. Free verse rejects the traditional forms of poetry; in particular, it renounces those features that constitute the line as an auditory unit. Thus, linear end-rhyme is not normally employed in free verse, and any free verse metre can only be defined independently of lineation. Since such a definition requires a structural flexibility which seems to contradict the etymological sense of "metre" as "measure", most metrists regard free verse as unmetrical. Yet, at the same time, they would concede that "unmetrical verse" still retains some kind of linguistic rhythm, a rhythm invoked by the recurrence of syntactic or lexical elements, for example, or describable in terms of irregular linear stress patterns. While recurrent language features may produce a strong rhythmic effect when they occasionally become conspicuous, a description of the accentual structures within each line usually fails to yield insightful results because the line in free verse does not, as in traditional poetry, serve primarily to mark the most important rhythmic segments of a poem. What is needed is an analytical approach which examines accentual rhythm in its linguistic variety, and which accounts for the possibility of different interpretations of the rhythmic material without having to abandon the theoretical basis of its methodology.

The usefulness of a theory depends not only on the logic of its argumentative structure, but also on the comprehensibility of its results. For a theoretical analysis to be readily understandable and produce valuable insights, it must in some way or other relate to less sophisticated, common-sense notions of the subject under investigation. What may, in metrics, be of some practical use to the reader of verse, is a holistic approach that recognizes the inseparability of form and content. "We will get nowhere in versification," writes T.V.F. Brogan in the introduction to his compendious bibliography of English metrics (1981: xxv), "until we [....] take the poem as a complex structure of meanings, i.e. a semantic system, in which many diverse and disparate types of elements and structures *all contribute information* in varying degrees and at various levels." This statement not only applies to meaning, but holds true for any linguistic aspects of poetry, including metre, so that a metrical pattern can be said to emerge as the result of accentual as well as syntactic and semantic considerations. It will be seen, below, that this kind of holism is particularly important in the metro-rhythmic analysis of a free verse poem. Almost thirty years ago, Paul Ramsey (1968: 108) wrote as part of his conclusion to a very perceptive essay:

> Free verse can be partially analyzed and understood. Its metric habits, dispositions, and mysteries can also be seen in terms of the rhetoric and meaning and spiritual vision of the poems. It is a rich world for study and I would hope not merely accurate but illuminating study. Linguists should help us refine such study; so may musical metrics; keen ears and poetic sensibility must inform it.

However promising in its perspicacious observations on some metro-rhythmic aspects of free verse, Ramsey's essay did not bring about a sharp increase in analytical works on free verse metrics. Even as late as 1995, Beth Bjorklund exhorts her readers: "If prosody is to remain in touch with the times, as well as with critical debate in other

areas, it can no longer afford to ignore free verse" (1995: 565). The theory proposed in this thesis is intended to further the debate on structures in metrically irregular poetry.

In a holistic approach to free verse metrics - as, indeed, to metrics in general - due attention should be paid to the role played by an actual recitation of the poetic work. It is assumed that the performance of a free verse poem evokes a rhythmic response, even if the free verse text is mostly "scored [....] for the casual, conversational voice" (Hughes 1994: 321). The performative mode of a poem whose stress patterns do not readily correspond to a regular beat tends to be unpresumptuous and non-declamatory, but for that reason it is all the more susceptible to the subtleties of linguistic expression. Rather than attracting attention by dint of their relative conspicuousness, rhythm and metre in free verse remain on a par with other language features, and thus require to be specially singled out for a close examination of their properties. The cognitive effort necessary to perform such a task is bound to consider any correlation between linguistic elements that might affect the metro-rhythmic patterns of a free verse poem. Whether a syllable is more prominent than its immediate neighbours, and in what manner this prominence should be realized in an actual recitation, depends to a great extent on the semantic potential of the poem as well as on the different possibilities of metro-rhythmic perception. A metrical theory of free verse must investigate the relation between the not always unequivocally definable structures of the language material and their mental processing according to perceptual preference rules.

Certain fundamental questions need to be answered, before free verse can be metro-rhythmically analysed. In Chapter 1, we will discuss the concepts of rhythm and metre, and examine their possible relation to each other. Rhythm, it will be argued, is almost indefinable: from the most gripping movements of a waltz or tango to the flowing forms of a sculpture or statue nearly everything may be considered rhythmical. Rhythm is ubiquitous, and we will try to understand, from a philosophical perspective, how this universal relates to meaning. Yet, as we take a more pragmatic view of the matter, some features or patterns of features tend to be perceived as more rhythmical than others, so that, in the stricter sense, rhythm is largely defined by certain structural constellations. Although we refuse to give a straightforward definition of the phenomenon concerned, it will become obvious from our discussion of the definitions of other scholars that, for the purpose of this thesis, we favour a more narrowly defined notion of rhythm. Apart from investigating the rhythmic suitability of linguistic patterns, we will emphasize, in particular, the importance of rhythmic perception, that is, the ability of a person to fall in step intuitively with the characteristic properties of a potentially rhythmic structure. For the fact that a rhythmic response requires some cognitive effort in order to become effective is absolutely central to our concept of a free verse metre: there is no rhythm before it is experienced as such.

Cognitive introspection will also play a major role in the discussion of metre. Rather than distinguishing between different metrical forms and types, we will conceive of metre as an abstract function of rhythm. We contend that the two concepts of rhythm and metre are highly interdependent. One might want to repudiate such a claim by arguing that, for instance, a syllabic or rhopalic metre in English or German verse is not in itself rhythmical. This objection is certainly valid inasmuch as neither the number of syllables per line nor the gradually increasing number of syllables per word constitutes a primary source of rhythm in poetry. Language curbed

by a syllabic or rhopalic metre is almost to the same extent rhythmically controlled by accentual patterns as is the language of a poem with a tonic or syllabo-tonic metre. However negligible the rhythmic impact of such non-stress metres, they do nevertheless exert *some* influence on our perception of rhythm, because the boundaries of lines and words - governed as they are by a syllabic and rhopalic metre, respectively - affect the ways in which we respond to the rhythmic potential of stress patterns. The slight and subtle quality of this rather uncertain effect contrasts with the clearly defined concepts of both syllable-counting metres, which therefore can be regarded as specious and artificial. Thus, the rhythms of a poem metrically organized in syllabic patterns are principally reflected by an additional metre that accounts for the stress structure; the mere measuring of syllables represents a metre whose corresponding rhythm is only subsidiary. For the main rhythmic base in poetry is furnished by the undulation of relatively more and less prominent syllables. A detailed analysis of the relationship between rhythm and metre will, then, shed light on the cognitive implications of metro-rhythmic friction in its various forms, before leading to an overall concept of metrical theory in which each component is clearly defined with regard to its theoretical status. At the centre of this concept is the notion of *test reading*, which ensures that metre remains connected to the linguistic patterns of a poem. On the basis of the assumption that a poetic metre is primarily derived from accentual structures, whose rhythms it is supposed to elucidate, we are finally in a position to assess a variety of different approaches by other metrists.

The close examination of rhythm and metre is followed, in Chapter 2, by an attempt to define free verse both metrically and historically. Although there seems to be no difficulty at all in distinguishing a free verse poem from blank verse or any other regular metre, the boundary that separates the two poetic categories does not preclude the existence of unclassifiable borderline cases: what is rather straightforward in a theoretical approach may still pose a problem when it comes to applying the distinctive criteria in practice. This also holds true for the distinction between free verse, or verse in general, and concrete poetry. Moreover, a poem in free verse form is, from a historical point of view, not necessarily a free verse poem, because some free-versish poetry was written long before the appearance of a free verse *Zeitgeist*. In a short historical sketch, we will then try to assess the possible influence of pre-twentieth century irregular verse, and even prose, on the emergence of *vers libre* proper. Owing to the restricted lingual applicability of the theory proposed in this thesis, our discussion of free verse history focuses on the developments in English and German poetry. The importance of conceptual changes in the poetry of other languages, notably French, will be broached only briefly. Independent of the historical findings, we will finally develop a system for the classification of free verse which is based on metro-rhythmic considerations. This highly theoretical system gives an idea of the complexity of rhythm in free verse.

Chapter 3 deals with critical approaches to free verse rhythm. Since the emergence of *vers libre*, the minds of poets and critics alike have been haunted by the metro-rhythmic structures of that unprecedented form of poetry. Its total or partial rejection of a linear metre and end-rhyme leaves free verse analysts without any extrinsic cues as to the rhythmic organization of a poem: they must either content themselves with whatever rhythm they can detect in the unpredictable patterns of free verse language, or resort to a more philosophical view of the matter, in which aspects of practicability are of minor importance. While the latter approach tends to yield fundamental insights into the historical conception of free verse as a new rhythmic mode of poetic

expression, the former tries to track down rhythm, in one form or another, by an often highly specific analysis of linguistic strictures. Thus, some metrists stick to accentual patterns in their analyses, whereas others consider a close examination of grammatical or intonational features most rewarding. Whichever technique is preferred, the results are, unfortunately, not always satisfactory; mostly, because some performative idiosyncrasy not accounted for by an effective theoretical framework disallows the general validity of any positive findings. As we critically evaluate these approaches to rhythm in free verse, we will, in some degree, try to justify each of them on the basis of their aspirations and achievements.

"The metrical structure of free verse" represents not only the title of this thesis but also the title of Chapter 4, in which I expound my own theory of metre in metrically irregular poetry. This theory constitutes, so to speak, the core or nucleus of the work as a whole: without it, there would be no thesis. In tracing its origins retrospectively, I would like to point out that my first idea of a free verse metre goes back to a time when ignorance still accompanied my gradually emerging interest in metrical issues. I was impressed by William Carlos Williams' curious quest for a new metre; and on trying to write a free verse poem myself, I discovered that its stress patterns might be organized symmetrically within phrases rather than lines. Accordingly, the concept of a metrical gestalt became crucial to the development of a structural metre. It is probably thanks to my complete lack of knowledge, at that time, in the field of metrical theory, that I could think of developing a concept which was, and still is, largely considered to be unfeasible. The resulting theory of free verse metre is distinguished by an undogmatic, yet sufficiently regulated, flexibility. Owing to the cognitive mode employed in the establishment of a theoretical foundation, any aspects of metro-rhythmic perception which are frequently disregarded in other approaches become part of a complex web of interactions between the various elements of rhythm and their possible effects on the reader of a poem. This attention to all rhythmically relevant features can be regarded as the major characteristic of my metrical theory.

Since structural metrics is applicable to English and German, it may well be used to compare the free verse rhythms of these two languages. Chapter 5 makes a first attempt in this direction. It starts out from the assumption that English and German are dissimilar with regard to their respective stress pattern potentials, and that this dissimilarity will, to some extent, become manifest if we juxtapose an English or German poem with its German or English translation. In this way, it is possible to find out how far a particular semantic notion or concept requires a different rhythmic pattern in the two languages. These findings are assessed against the background of linguistic differences between English and German, as it can be assumed that any contrasting structures in phonology and grammar are also reflected in the metro-rhythmic potentials of either language. Albeit interesting, the results of such an investigation are not statistically relevant because of the specific selection of translation examples. We will, therefore, discuss, at the end of the chapter, in what manner a comparative metrics may examine more comprehensively the metrical differences between English and German free verse.

What are the benefits of a theory that purports to illuminate the metro-rhythmic patterns of metrically irregular poetry? Does a structural metre yield genuine insights into free verse rhythm, or does it simply describe one idiosyncratic possibility of rendering a poem? Why do we need a theoretical concept in order to understand the rhythmic structures in English and German free verse? These are important questions which will be answered as the argument of the thesis unfolds. By way of concluding

this introduction, we will briefly outline the range of achievements that can be claimed for our theory. First of all, free verse metrics breaks the spell of a taboo in metrical analysis, in that it tackles a problem for which a satisfactory solution is generally deemed to be impossible. It reaches out for the ultimate metre in language, whose patterns are especially palpable in free verse. Since such an investigation depends on certain beliefs and assumptions regarding the rhythmic function of accentual structures and their metrical interpretability, the whole theoretical edifice can only emerge as a carefully negotiated compromise between the needs of an abstract logic and its relevance to the linguistic entity of a poem. Thus, a metro-rhythmic understanding of free verse demands concessions to the rigidity of a metrical pattern as well as to the ostensible straightforwardness of lexico-phrasal stress structures. It is of great importance to the working of our theory that any metro-linguistic devices are kept under strict control in order to avoid the arbitrariness of a purely performative approach. If this is successfully done, we can expect the following benefits: comprehending the rhythms of metrically irregular poetry will enable us to read free verse aloud to the beat of an underlying metre; different types of free verse can be defined on a metrical basis; a metro-rhythmic distinction between free verse forms will complement the historical discussion of the subject; and comparative metrics may take advantage of the fact that our theory is applicable to both English and German free verse. With the approach proposed in this thesis, free verse will cease to be metrically inscrutable. It will take on a new, positive metrical identity and, as a result, appear less antagonistic to the linear metres of the poetic tradition.

1. Fundamental presuppositions

1.1. Rhythm: an exploration of its nature and scope

Any metrical study of verse will have to account for rhythm as a basic phenomenon which, owing to its wide and vague application in ordinary speech, has to be redefined, or at least relocated, with regard to each context of investigation. While the meaning is most specific in connection with dance or music, where rhythm is almost invariably perceived to be inherent in regular movements or sound patterns, the notion of rhythm becomes already more complex in poetry, where the semantic dimension impinges on the development of rhythmic structures. In non-poetic language, where linguistic form loses at least part of its significance, the all-prevailing role of semantics marginalizes rhythm so that the linguistic material is not infrequently regarded as unrhythmical. The relevant criterion, here, is obviously that of perceived regularity. And indeed, any pattern of events may have rhythm if the recurrence of its elements can be anticipated. Thus, we often attribute rhythmical quality to periodic phenomena, when we speak of "the rhythm of the seasons" or "the rhythm of day and night".[1] Still, "rhythm" seems not even to be confined to temporal events but is also used somewhat analogous to the semantic applicability of "regularity" with reference to static form both in visual art and architecture (see Trier in Standop 1989: 148, and also Lockemann 1960: 12-13). Rhythm cannot be stopped: it conquers gradually the whole world of signifiers in a vain attempt to control the process of signification. In phrases such as "the rhythm of the universe" not even the context is likely to be able to clarify the meaning. Inappropriate signification *within the phrase* increases the potential of signification of the phrase *within its context* to an extent which almost annihilates signification through semantic inflation.

Rhythm and meaning are to a large degree interrelated; yet, this interrelationship is more often characterized by mutual marginalization than by mutual reinforcement. For rhythm is not a semantic notion (see Meschonnic 1982: 69); it is rather a structural vehicle which enables meaning to come forth and happen. And meaning, on the other hand, provides the material to be rhythmically formed. There is constant confrontation between the two because of their mutual interdependence. In order to understand this relationship at bottom, let us look at the origin of meaning in the trace of writing as *différance* (see Derrida 1967). For a signifier to signify presupposes another signifier to be signified. Therefore, meaning cannot exist in atemporal selfness, as meaning in itself, but is dependent on the trace, which generates meaning in that it constitutes the presence in signification of a signifier already absent. The process of signification in the trace is essentially a process in time (we could say, time is a by-product of the process of signification), and processed time is time pattern is rhythm. This is why meaning cannot exist outside rhythm. And rhythm would come into being only if a potential signifier gave up its atemporality (i.e. its timeless non-existence) in order to be and mean in signification. The reciprocity of the relationship between rhythm and meaning should always be kept in the back of one's mind when it comes to tackling the variety of possible interrelations ranging from the meaning of rhythm to the rhythm of meaning.

[1] Harding, in the opening paragraph of his chapter on *The nature of rhythm*, gives an impression of the wide applicability of the word "rhythm" (1976: 1).

Analytical practice, however, requires a distinction between different modes of meaning. Thus, musical meaning[2] is largely incompatible with linguistic meaning, since the former lacks the complex semantic conventions of the latter. The words and word patterns of language, though in principle semantically unrestricted, are curbed by a communicative necessity which demands a comparatively high degree of semantic specification. Musical meaning enters the more specified realm of linguistic meaning only occasionally, in a symphonic poem, for example, or when words are set to music. In both cases, the elements of music - tone pitch and melody, tone colour and instrumentation, tone dynamics and rhythm, tone harmonics and counterpoint - combine so as to achieve an emotional effect that in some way or other corresponds to the actual meaning of the idea to be expressed. Music means in the ensemble of all its elements, but some elements are more significant than others. While music can do without harmonics in a piece for solo clarinet, for instance, and dispense with melody in any side drum playing, it cannot exist without tone colour and rhythm.[3] And since tone colour remains a musical constant more often than rhythm remains a musical constant, it follows that rhythm generally constitutes the basis of meaning in music. We can say that the meaning of music consists in the meaning of rhythm as modified by the meanings of the other musical elements.

The meaning of rhythm in music can best be expressed in dance, for rhythm is the essence of dance (see Trier in Standop 1989: 152). All rhythmic elements come together when dance shapes time into patterns of bodily movement so as to make rhythm visible. Dance unifies rhythm in the person of the dancer, and therefore it is an entirely subjective phenomenon. It involves a rhythmic experience that hinges on both perceptive and performative rhythmic ability rather than going back to any objective criteria of form or pattern in the rhythmic material. A dancing dancer must needs be in rhythm, or else he or she would not be dancing. One would expect the rhythmic performance of a person to be at best as good as his or her rhythmic perception, yet it has been shown that rhythmic perception does not necessarily confine the scope of rhythmic performance. Discussing the results of his investigation into rhythmic abilities, Thackray writes:

> If it is possible for a subject to score highly on a performance test and poorly on a test of perception, it would appear that perception is not a necessary ingredient of performance. Much depends on the interpretation of the term "perception", but as used in the context of rhythmic perception tests, perception implies a conscious, cognitive response to the stimulus. In contrast, a test of performance may sometimes, as we

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[2] The question whether music conveys meaning is not easily answered. It is obvious that "every sound, music or noise, imparts information about states and processes in the material world as well as contributing to an acoustic perceptual background" (Maconie 1990: 15). For there is no smoke without fire. However, it is not so clear whether music can have "concrete meaning", whether it can mean, for example, "a specific aspect of nature" (Nattiez 1990: 103). Chabanon, analysing Gluck, has argued that

> les Matelots ... sont gais au moment où ils chantent tristement. Ainsi, la Musique pour eux n'est pas un langage d'expression: ce n'est pas un Art qui imite, ni qui cherche même à imiter.
> (The quotation (Chabanon, Michel-Paul Guy de, Observation sur la musique et principalement sur la metaphysique de l'art, Réimpression des éditions de Paris, 1779 et 1764 (Geneva, 1969)) is taken from Barry 1987: 72).

Thus, if music signifies, its meaning is different from the meaning of language.

[3] This implies a definition of music as artistic sound *sequence,* not simply sound.

> have observed, be done spontaneously and with a minimum of conscious effort by those subjects who are naturally drawn to an intuitive approach rather than to a consciously analytical one. (1969: 44)

As dance is essentially performative, it may well be principally governed by the unconscious. In such a case, the dancer will be unable to translate the vagueness of rhythmic meaning into the concreteness of linguistic meaning. To dance is to perform rhythm. If walking were to be a rhythmic experience, one would have to walk dancingly. This would involve a conscious effort to perceive the movement of walking as rhythmical. The perfection of rhythm in dance is, however, not much impaired by semantic interference, since, in dance, linguistic meaning will hardly ever prevail over rhythmic meaning.

The situation is different in poetry, where meaning is on a par with rhythm. Poetic meaning unfolds through rhythm because the poetic material is *per definitionem* subject to rhythmic organization.[4] There is in poetry no possibility for meaning to avoid rhythm, but there is an opportunity for meaning to choose rhythm. This choice will have to take into account all the linguistic elements that constitute poetic meaning and poetic rhythm; some of which will be more relevant to meaning, while others will be more relevant to rhythm. It should be noticed here that poetic meaning is not exactly the same as linguistic meaning, just as poetic language is not the same as non-poetic language. Since the poetic context multiplies linguistic meaning paradigmatically, the effect of any semantic choice is much greater in poetic language than in non-poetic language. A semantic choice, however, is at the same time a rhythmic choice, for both meaning and rhythm in poetry depend on the same linguistic material: sound and stress patterns of words are selected and arranged so as to suit both the manner of expression and the concept to be expressed. The relationship between rhythm and meaning is so intricate that "every alteration in rhythm is an alteration in meaning" (Dale 1972/3: 14). Owing to the semantic potential of poetic meaning and the resulting necessity to show the utmost care in choosing a word or phrase, there seems to be not much scope left for any choice of rhythm. But as the semantic potential is theoretically infinite, poetic meaning is largely unpredictable. It is in this grey area, where poetic meaning becomes relatively independent, that poetic rhythm can choose the linguistic material: the scope of any rhythmic choice is determined by the limitations of semantic predictability. If meaning is intended by the poet to range within narrow confines, rhythmic choice will be more restricted than in the case of a poetic design preferring semantic freedom. The effects of rhythm and meaning, however, should not be judged separately as it is only in their amalgamation that we experience rhythmic satisfaction and semantic suggestiveness. And yet, rhythmic adaptations of the linguistic material too often necessitate semantic compromises. What would have been best expressed in one way, is said in another way because of rhythmic considerations. As a consequence, the originally intended semantic potential is given up in favour of a similar but less satisfactory semantic potential. Ideally, there should be no concessions on either side: rhythm and meaning in poetry should go together from the very beginning in order to reinforce one another in the poetic expression.[5] Yet, poetic ideals are there to be sacrificed to the poetic reality.

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[4] See Chapter 4 for a discussion of the general significance of rhythmic organization in poetry.

[5] Cf. T.S. Eliot: "The poem comes before the form, in the sense that a form grows out of the attempt of somebody to say something" (1957: 32).

The above discussion has revealed how intricate the relationship is between rhythm and meaning, how both strive to be independent of each other but at the same time have to admit their mutual dependence, and how skilful handling they require in poetry when it comes to joining them advantageously. The close connection between rhythm and meaning makes it particularly difficult to answer the question, what is rhythm? No definition could cover all the elements involved in the establishment of a concept of rhythm; and the multitude of ways in which the term is used asks for a broad spectrum of definitions. For rhythm as such ceases to exist when we try to restrict what is essentially unrestrictable. Since the only restriction of rhythm lies not in its nature but in its contextuality, we should not attempt a definitive outline of what rhythm is but rather aim at a relational characterization of what "rhythm" could mean. Not any assumed set of criteria but a careful and variable interlexical balance of "rhythm" within its context can do justice to our continuously changing picture of the momentary and evanescent concepts of rhythm. Yet until we are in a position to illuminate sporadically some of the flitting shadows of rhythm, the term can only be defined as the infinite sum of all its possible definitions.

Rather than forcing rhythm into the straitjacket of a definition, we should try to understand the term in its multifaceted linguistic representations including the etymological background. The Greek etymon *rhuthmos* is almost generally considered to be derived from the verb *rheîn*, but - though there are no morphological difficulties - this derivation poses a problem for semantic reasons (see Benveniste 1966: 327-328). In order to account for the link between the meanings of *rheîn*, "to flow", and *rhuthmos*, "measured motion, time, measure, proportion", it has been suggested that the Greeks when they coined the word *rhuthmos* were inspired by the movement of ocean waves. However, as Benveniste and Trier point out (see Benveniste 1966: 328, and Trier in Standop 1989: 152), the verb *rheîn* is never used in connection with the rolling of the waves of the sea, but it always denotes the flowing of a brook or river. And how can the flowing of a river convey rhythmicity? Even the regular movements of the sea - with masses of water waxing bigger and bigger, till finally piled-up in well-ordered form they collapse into a white spray chaos and retreat into the ocean's womb only to be shaped anew - these movements, though often regarded as rhythmic, lack that basic characteristic of rhythmicity, human intentionality, which is so essential to rhythmic performance (see Trier in Standop 1989: 152). Greek nouns ending in *-thmos* are said to involve some kind of intentional activity (ibid.) and to indicate some particular mode of accomplishment (see Benveniste 1966: 332). Originally, the term *rhuthmos* was never used to denote the regular movement of waves, but signified "distinctive form" or "proportionate figure" rather than "rhythm". The connection with *rheîn* not being totally rejected, *rhuthmos* had come to mean form in movement, a configuration determined by the instant of its existence in the flux of mutability.[6] While Benveniste still accepts the morphological derivation of *rhuthmos* from *rheîn*, Trier situates *rhuthmos* in a completely new context. He explores the semantic relations between rhythm and dance, and finally arrives at a morphological connection of *rhuthmos* with words relating to the protective function of a dancing circle. The meaning of "rhythm" is supposed to go back to the fence-like ring of dance, which forms the original centre of

[6] "*Rhuthmos* [....] désigne la forme dans l'instant qu'elle est assumée par ce qui est mouvant, mobile, fluide, la forme de ce qui n'a pas consistance organique. [....] *Rhuthmos* [....] ait été le terme le plus propre à décrire des 'dispositions' ou des 'configurations' sans fixité ni nécessité naturelle et résultant d'un arrangement toujours sujet à changer" (Benveniste 1966: 333).

a festive ceremony (see Trier in Standop 1989: 152 and 147). This etymological derivation regards the subjectivity of the rhythmic experience as most significant: there is no rhythm outside the circular configuration of dancers, no rhythm outside the enclosure of the fence; rhythm must come from within.[7]

Taking the above etymological explanations as a starting point, we find that the three main characteristics of rhythm are motion, shape, and subjectivity. In poetry, this means that the poetic language has to be patterned in time by both the poet and the reader or listener. This process of patterning is subject to a whole range of linguistic and cognitive criteria. We must pay attention to the phonological qualities of the language, analyse the rhythmic patterns with regard to their structure, and relate the results to our subjective perception of rhythm. It is the variability of our interpretation that makes an agreement on the issue of rhythmicity so often impossible. While some would consider rhythm to be an intuitive sensation that is felt immediately, others would extend their rhythmical experience to a rational understanding of the phenomenon of rhythm. The problem is, however, that intuition and cognition cannot always be kept apart because they influence each other. We may well be able to feel what we understand; yet, vice versa, we rather tend not to understand what we feel. A rhythm recognized as such on the grounds of a certain linguistic pattern may teach us to emotionally experience it as rhythm; whereas a pure rhythmical feeling - though often reduced to some simple pattern of a recurrent stimulus - must ultimately remain unexplained, because we do not know why we try to feel rhythm, that is, to achieve harmony between the physical oscillations of rhythmic patterns and our own emotional vibrations (see Trier in Standop 1989: 150). Since language involves linguistic meaning, the rhythms of poetry are always experienced through both feeling and understanding. It is this mutuality of reason and emotion which renders by dint of its infinite variability the discussion of poetic rhythm inexhaustible.

The various definitions of rhythm reflect in their relative emphasis of rhythmic elements the duality of intuitive perception and rational understanding. The following brief critical examination of some definitions will reveal to what extent a rhythmic element is regarded as essential. We read, for example: "*Rhythm, in poetry, is the temporal distribution of the elements of language*" (Hartman 1980: 14). This definition takes for granted the element of rhythmic perception as it concentrates solely on the temporality of the rhythmic material. Language is patterned in time and therefore generates rhythm. The definition does not specify whether we experience rhythm according to phonological, metrical, lexical, syntactic, or even semantic patterns. However, assuming the phonological elements of language - "the elements of speech" (ibid.) - to be relevant to rhythmic organization, Hartman silently passes over the implication of his definition that all linguistic elements contribute eventually to our rhythmic perception of any phonological patterns. As it stands, Hartman's definition accounts only for the physical side of the rhythmic phenomenon. It fails to do justice to the equally important aspect of the subjectivity of rhythmic experience.

A different concept of poetic rhythm is proposed by Bräuer (see Bräuer 1964: 10-11). He argues that the mere sequence of two perceptual elements does not suffice to

[7] Moreover, since rhythm is inherent in humanity, it exists outside history. Cf. Blümel: "Jede Art von Rhythmus gehört mit ihrem ganzen Formenbestand zum Wesen des Menschen" (1930: 3). Cf. also Lockemann: "Rhythmus aber ist das ganz Individuelle und damit zugleich das allgemein Menschliche und darum Übergeschichtliche, das nur an den der Geschichtlichkeit unterworfenen Formen greifbar wird" (1960: 18).

generate a rhythmic effect. Only when the second element is being embedded in a triple form ("Dreiform"), in which the third element is recognized as equal or similar to the first but distinct from the second - only then can we feel a rhythmic response. Thus it is that neither the trochaic nor the iambic foot is rhythmic in itself; but rhythm starts with either amphibrach or amphimacer. This wave-like shape constitutes the original rhythm. As in nature the billows of the sea assume an infinite number of shapes, so in language the rhythmic possibilities are equally infinite. No speech utterance can be free from rhythm of some kind or other. Bräuer's notion of rhythm is based on the shape of the rhythmic material, in relation to which the perceptual dimension is treated as a constant presupposition. Despite this neglect of the important role played by the subjectivity of the rhythmic perception, the idea of a rhythmic form shaped like a wave is rather intriguing. In its natural simplicity, the concept of a triform rhythm combines symmetry and variability into a flexible rhythmical unit. However, our perception of this unit in poetry is subject to linguistic and prosodic constraints that limit the flexibility of the triform pattern not within itself but within the dynamism of the rhythmic material. These constraints may force us to consider more complex wave forms to constitute the rhythmic units in poetry.

Other definitions try to be more specific about the relationship in rhythm between time or motion, shape, and subjectivity. Thus, Heusler defines rhythm as the division of time into sensually graspable parts ("Gliederung der Zeit in sinnlich faßbare Teile" (1956, vol. I: 17)). If time is to be subject to division, it needs to be filled with temporal material. Rhythmic material is therefore temporal material. The organization of this material into shapes hinges on our subjective sense perception. And yet, we may ask if there are not also sensually graspable parts in time which we would not consider to be rhythmical. All depends on our notion of sense: a sensory impression may either call for a rational explanation, or evoke an intuitive response. It is only in the latter event or in a combination of both events that we can have a rhythmic experience. By claiming that the parts must not exceed a few seconds in order for them to be grasped and measured by the senses (see 1956, vol. I: 17), Heusler acknowledges the necessity for an intuitive response, a response in which rhythm is felt rather than being reasoned. This necessity to feel rhythm goes back to a natural desire for well-ordered rhythm (see Heusler 1956, vol. I: 18). It is clear that there are some rhythms which are more likely than others to produce an immediate rhythmic sensation. The criteria that distinguish between various degrees of rhythmicity are well-formedness for rhythmic shape and regularity for rhythmic motion.

In his quite extraordinary essay on rhythm, Trier proceeds towards a definition that includes regularity as a major feature of rhythmic perception:

> Rhythmus ist die Ordnung im Verlauf gegliederter Gestalten, die darauf angelegt ist, durch regelmäßige Wiederkehr wesentlicher Züge ein Einschwingungsstreben zu erwecken und zu befriedigen. (in Standop 1989: 148)
>
> (I translate: rhythm is the order of temporally organized shapes which is intended to evoke and satisfy a desire for harmonic vibrations through the regular recurrence of essential traits.)

In this definition, the two main aspects of rhythmic experience are equally prominent. Rhythm requires the active co-operation between both the rhythmic material shaped

in time and our inclination to rhythmic satisfaction. Temporal regularity constitutes the basis on which this co-operation is to have the desired effect. Trier, however, points out that the notion of temporal regularity, though somewhat emerging from the rhythmic material, is still conditional upon our subjective impression. Only what we feel as equal time is equal time (see Trier in Standop 1989: 151). The interdependence between the material and its rhythmic recognition is patent: an absolutely regular distribution of the elements in the material will not be called rhythmic unless we feel able to satisfy in the resulting pattern our desire for harmonic vibrations;[8] and, vice versa, a strong wish for rhythmic experience still presupposes a minimum of rhythmic potential within the material in order to create rhythm. Trier's definition focuses on the most obvious applications of the term "rhythm". Whatever goes beyond that, is mere metaphor.

Cureton assumes a point of view quite contrary to that of Trier. His notion of rhythm comprises, in addition to the most typical kinds of rhythmic perception, our internal responses to almost all everyday experiences - such as breathing, hunger, sleep, work, play, etc. - many of which Trier would hesitate to describe even metaphorically as rhythmic. Rhythm, as Cureton sees it, is multidimensional (see Cureton 1992: 1). In poetry, for example, the complex amalgamation of both linguistic and non-linguistic elements in the text as a rhythmic construct yields a network of patterns which to disentangle completely is often impossible. The idea of rhythm as an almost unlimited phenomenon would brook no subjection to physical or linguistic constraints. Thus, regularity - though an important aspect of Trier's definition - cannot be accepted by Cureton as a factor relevant to rhythmic experience. While many physically regular patterns evoke little or no rhythmic response,[9] poetic language is felt to be rhythmical, even though the rhythmic stimuli do not occur at strictly isochronous intervals. Unlike Trier, Cureton does not take into account the possibility of a perceptual rather than physical isochrony. He rejects linguistic isochrony because he fails to acknowledge that what is to be regarded as regular is not a matter of linguistic or physical definition, but a matter of intuitive experience: regular is what we feel to be regular. This point will have to be discussed in more detail below.

Cureton claims that we experience rhythm not just as a linear pattern in time but as a complex hierarchical structure.[10] He assumes

> that rhythmic structures are cognitive representations of the flow of energy in the stream of our experience. The essential feature represented in these structures is *relative prominence*, and the major vehicle for this structuring is the well-formed *hierarchy*. (1992: 121)

While most discussions of rhythm are based on the accentual patterns of poetic language, as it is on this phonological level that we agree most readily in our rhythmic responses, Cureton considers the elements on all textual levels to be rhythmically

[8] Cf. also Lockemann: "Es ist gerade die Dynamik des Rhythmischen, der Zwang zum Einschwingen, der seine Mitteilbarkeit verbürgt" (1960: 16).

[9] Cureton gives as examples, "a machine-gun blast, or a steam drill, or a woodpecker, or the recurrent triggering of my watch alarm each day at noon" (1992: 107).

[10] Abercrombie also acknowledges the hierarchical structure of a poem, but he points out that there are limits to our perception of rhythmic hierarchies: "We are continually conscious of large rhythmic effects which *ought* to combine, if only we had the ability to integrate them, into a single form corresponding with the whole significance" (1923: 35).

significant. In his concept of rhythm, the three rhythmic components - metre, grouping, prolongation - describe three different ways of arriving at a rhythmic response. Cureton states the componential conditions as follows:

> An experience is rhythmic if it contains any *one* of these components. Most rhythmic perception involves more than one rhythmic component, however, and poetic rhythm (and rhythm in other art forms, such as music) often contains all three. In rhythmic experiences that contain all three components, grouping seems to be the most basic and central; prolongation the most embracing and cognitively advanced; and meter the most primitive and physically controlled. (1992: 123)

If we take rhythmic experience as a whole, the metrical component plays a minor role compared to grouping and prolongation. These latter components depend on so-called grouping well-formedness rules (GWFRs) and grouping preference rules (GPRs) for their structural patterning of the text.[11] While the GWFRs concern the internal structure of the rhythmic phrases and their hierarchies, the GPRs - based as they are on all sorts of cognitive input - condition our choice of one phrasing possibility from among other phrasing possibilities. Grouping describes the relative prominence of the phrasal elements according to a rather static binary system that assigns to them either weakness or strength. Prolongation goes one step further in that it tries to capture the dynamics of our temporal experience of the phrases in terms of anticipation, arrival, and extension. Cureton implies that this cognitive response - as it structures the poetic events according to their multifunctional roles within the multidimensional framework of the text - is essentially a rhythmic response.

We deal, then, with a rhythmic concept which embraces poetic rhythm as the unifying principle of a verse text. No textual phenomenon in poetry can escape rhythmic control. Yet with such a global approach to poetic rhythm, we easily lose track of the fundamentally rhythmic elements. The question is, whether we get rhythmic satisfaction, for instance, from any sophisticated grouping of semantic elements (according to GPR1(information)) as they evolve in the never fixable patterns of associative meanings. Too much reasoning is involved in this process for us to be able to feel an immediate rhythmic effect. If we compare Seashore's definition of a sense of rhythm as "an instinctive disposition to group recurrent sense impressions vividly and with precision, by time or intensity, or both, in such a way as to derive pleasure and efficiency through the grouping,"[12] we notice that Cureton's concept of rhythm largely dispenses with instinct as a component of rhythmic experience. For both grouping and prolongation first appeal to the mind, leaving instinct to be arbiter in disputable cases. Rhythm, it is true, can be attributed to virtually any patterned phenomenon, because it is a very personal matter owing to the subjectivity of our rhythmic experience. However, in poetic practice, an instinctive and immediate rhythmic response - one that yields direct emotional pleasure - can be derived basically from those textual areas for which Cureton has reserved his concept

[11] Perhaps it would have been better to call these rules "phrasing rules" rather than "grouping rules", because their application is equally valid for grouping and prolongation.

[12] C.E. Seashore's quotation (from "The sense of rhythm as a musical talent." *Mus Quart* IV, 1918: 507) is given in Thackray (1969: 19).

of metre. What goes beyond the metrical realm in poetry is not primarily rhythm but cognitive structure.[13]

These considerations reveal the problem of analysing rhythm in poetry as our inability to unequivocally delineate the scope of our rhythmic experience. Even though we may be able to point out exactly those textual patterns that we feel to be relevant to our rhythmic experience, we are unlikely to be able to point out all the factors which contribute to the establishment of a particular rhythm. These factors are mainly linguistic elements that have passed the cognitive filter of our perception. If we accept the stress patterns to be primarily responsible for our rhythmic experience of English poetry, we will have to acknowledge the not unimportant role played by the sonic, lexical, syntactic, and semantic aspects of language in determining and reinforcing rhythmic patterns even to the extent of creating a metrical option. A poem read to us in a language we do not know can already evoke a rhythmic response. This sensation, however, is caused in the poem only by the acoustic realization of the phonological elements of that language. Since, unlike music, "language is not essentially rhythmic" (Cureton 1992: 201) owing to the inevitable omnipresence of linguistic meaning, our rhythmic impression of a poetic recitation in an unknown language must needs remain comparatively shallow. Unless we are aware of the meaning that underlies the rhythmic interpretation of a poem, we are unable to relish its rhythm in full. For the semantic dimension reinforces considerably the rhythmic impression initiated by any phonologically determined stress pattern.[14] Thus, in poetry, rhythm and meaning complement each other in their mutual influence on our rhythmic experience. However, unlike Cureton, we do not believe that this experience is dominated by cognitive structures of meaning, but that it is effected by linguistic stress patterns, whose rhythmic capacity is formed to at least some extent by the semantic charge of its elements. Poetic meaning in itself is unrhythmical, yet the accentual rhythm of a verse text constitutes a vehicle for poetic meaning to be rhythmically recognized.

The linguistic stress patterns are, of course, not rhythmic in themselves. They need to be rhythmized in order for us to experience one possible manifestation of their rhythmic potential. Rhythm is latently inherent in language, for otherwise most poetry would be impossible. We have to ask, however, to what extent does language - in our case, either English or German - provide the prerequisites necessary for rhythmization, and what are these prerequisites. Since the linguistic material is perceived in time, it is perceived in temporal units. In English as a perceptually stress-timed language, these units are delimited by emphatic stresses. The tendency in spoken speech of these stresses to recur at regular intervals would render the temporal units isochronous. Yet, precisely this appears to be not at all certain. Couper-Kuhlen remarks: "As for the isochrony debate, the situation is stalemated with 'believers' claiming isochrony exists - if only perceptually - but 'disbelievers' finding no concrete proof of it in the acoustic signal" (1993: 14). However, to rely on "simple measurement in the acoustic signal for pronouncements concerning human language and speech betrays a fundamental fallacy, viz. the belief that acoustic phenomena

[13] For an interesting discussion of Cureton's work, see Attridge's (1996) critique of it and Cureton's (1996) response to that critique.

[14] However, Jost writes: "Nach Minor haben wir nur in der Musik, genauer gesagt in der Instrumentalmusik, den reinen Rhythmus, in der Poesie dagegen den angewandten. Denn in der Poesie sei der Sinn die Hauptsache, und Verse würden weniger nach dem Rhythmus als nach dem Sinn vorgetragen. Das Dazwischentreten der Sprache wäre es also, das die 'Reinheit' des Rhythmus beeinträchtigt" (1976: 17-18).

translate directly into linguistic units" (ibid.). Experiments have shown that syllable onsets are not relevant to our perception of isochronous intervals (different syllables timed at regular intervals according to their acoustic onsets are even perceived as irregular (see Couper-Kuhlen 1993: 15 footnote)), but that in order to produce perceptible isochrony, the isochronous units must be timed according to so-called "perceptual centers" (see Couper-Kuhlen 1993: 14-15), whose positioning within the syllable hinges on acoustic factors as well as individual variability (see Couper-Kuhlen 1993: 18 and 19). Being thus subject to unaccountable change, the P-centers cannot be located as concrete points in time but always keep within the realm of relativity. Yet, even though the verification of isochrony in speech is therefore likely to remain an illusion, Couper-Kuhlen convincingly demonstrates that, if we take into account among obvious acoustic aspects of speech the characteristics of the P-center phenomenon, spoken English is to a great extent isochronous.[15] On this basis, we may assume that to rhythmize the linguistic patterns of English poetry by rendering the relevant stress intervals perceptually isochronous should not pose insurmountable difficulties. However, we still have to discuss, whether this kind of regularity is essential to our rhythmic experience of poetic texts.

For an investigation into the relationship between rhythm and regularity, it will be useful to have a close look at the implications of rhythmic perception and rhythmic experience. To feel rhythm is to derive pleasure and efficiency through the grouping of sense impressions (see Seashore as quoted by Thackray 1969: 19), to satisfy a desire for harmonic vibrations (see Trier in Standop 1989: 148), and to experience contentment at the fulfilment of rhythmic expectation. However, we will only feel satisfied at the fulfilment of our rhythmic expectation, if we are given an opportunity to anticipate that which we expect. In poetic rhythm, this opportunity is provided by temporal regularity. We have two possibilities of rhythmizing the linguistic material in case the stress patterns appear to be irregular. First, we may adjust the intervals between stresses through either compressing or stretching the syllables in order to optimize isochrony (see Couper-Kuhlen 1993: 49). This adaptation of stress patterns will approximate the strictness of a musical rhythm and therefore sound rather unnatural if recited in that manner;[16] but on the other hand it will demonstrate the rhythmic potential of the text in its metrical essence and thus provide a cognitive basis for rhythmic perception. Another possibility of rhythmizing irregular stress patterns involves a mental trick. In order to be able to anticipate the occurrence of stresses at unequal intervals, we need to know in advance their temporal distribution. Only our foreknowledge of an accentual pattern, at which we have arrived through an active process of grouping, enables us to read this same pattern in a way so as to be fully aware of its rhythmic force. While remaining irregular in itself, the pattern as a whole

[15] Even Classe, whose experimental investigation into isochrony is based on objective acoustic measurements, acknowledges that "there seems to be good evidence that [isochronism] can be accepted, with some qualifications, as a characteristic which always seems to be present and to make its influence felt" (1939: 90).

[16] Brecht (1967: 399 ff.) gives examples of rhythmization which show that there are practically no linguistic restrictions on rhythmic scansion. And I myself recall, for instance, the newspaper sellers in Cardiff shouting "westermalego" with the main stress on the third syllable; and with a temporal rhythmization of syllables which renders the final syllable about three times as long as the equally long first and second syllables, while the shortest third and fourth syllables would together fit into one of the first two syllables. It is obvious that this accentuation and rhythmization makes it rather difficult to comprehend the meaning of the utterance: they were selling the "Western Mail" and the "(South Wales) Echo".

becomes regular in relation to its identical image in our mind. Regularity is, then, confirmed as a prerequisite for an emotional rhythmic experience.

Irregular rhythms in English poetry profit from the natural tendency of the language to distribute its word accents in perceptually isochronous intervals. As isochrony provides the framework of our rhythmic experience, an irregular linguistic pattern - though capable of affecting our perception of the isochronous frame - will never be able to fully prevent perceptual isochrony except through linguistic perversion. To what extent linguistic rules have to be violated to render isochronous intervals impossible, depends on our cognitive abilities to adjust the linguistically regular remains of the material. It is patent that the more irregular a stress pattern appears, the more difficult will we find its adaptation to a perceptually isochronous chain. However, since isochrony tends to be a natural linguistic ingredient, it may be sufficient in a poetic recitation to merely approximate temporal regularity between the stresses in order to produce a rhythmic effect. Our knowledge of the rhythmic potential in poetry - a potential which lies in the possibility of a strictly isochronous rhythmization of the linguistic material - enables us to prescind from the actual realization of the stress patterns as they are perceived in performance. Since we long to swing in harmony with the oscillations of poetic rhythm, we strive to make the linguistic patterns correspond to our own rhythmic expectations. This rational process is characterized by a certain degree of flexibility as regards the rhythmic potential of the linguistic material and our ability to feel as rhythm what we have come to understand as rhythm. If the linguistic material and our capacity for rhythmic emotion fail to be flexible enough to allow their amalgamation in a positive feeling of rhythm, the second method of rhythmization through the mental preconception of a stress pattern may serve as a final resort for us to satisfy our desire for rhythm. Thus, in language, it is impossible for rhythm to escape the keen pursuit of a competent rhythm hunter.

Although we may always be able to lock on to some rhythm in language, we have to make a more or less strong effort before we are allowed to indulge in the experience of a rhythmic feeling. A strong rhythmic pulse, as it lies latent in the linguistic material, will need less effort to be aroused than a weak one. The verbal stress patterns can even be arranged and reinforced in a way that makes it nothing short of compulsory for us to yield to their rhythmic force.[17] We encounter these patterns mainly in nursery rhymes, but also serious poets may occasionally betray a liking for irresistibly compelling rhythms - think, for example, of Poe's "The Raven" or Hardy's "The Going of the Battery". At the other end of the rhythmic scale we find free verse, whose rhythms may be emotionally acquired only after a strong mental effort of rhythmization. Most poetry, however, would rank somewhere between the two extremes of nursery rhymes and free verse. Presenting the golden mean between obtrusive and inconspicuous rhythms, these poems with a traditional metre try to achieve a semantico-rhythmic equilibrium in that they develop their meaning within the confines of an obvious metrical pattern, which prevents rhythm from being semantically smothered. In view of the whole range of different degrees of rhythmic conspicuousness and the resulting variety of efforts necessary in order to experience a more or less intensive rhythmic feeling, we may speak accordingly of different degrees of rhythmicity. Thus, a poem whose rhythm can be felt immediately and with ease is more rhythmical than a poem whose rhythm requires strong effort to be felt at all. Note, however, that the *quality* of our rhythmic experience may, unlike its

[17] On rhythmic compulsion, see also Frey (1980: 44 ff.).

intensity, not be commensurate with the rhythmic accessibility of a poem. The satisfaction of arriving at a rhythmic feeling in rhythmically weak verse often surpasses the rhythmic impression made by more compulsary but monotonous stress patterns.

1.2. Metre: its function, its description, and its relation to rhythm

Unlike rhythm, which in its vast and uncontrollable dimensions outshines inevitably even the most brilliant account of its characteristics, metre presents itself as something sober and matter-of-fact, combining simple practicality and applicability with scientific exactitude in order to render intelligible on a theoretical basis those undulations of linguistic stress in which the reader of a poem is supposed to indulge for their rhythmicity. Metrical theory tries to satisfy our eagerness for a rational explanation of poetic rhythm in that it sets out to provide a conceptual edifice whose elements are meant to tie in with the rhythmic essentials of verse. Most fundamental among these elements, the abstract notion of metre is conjured up to account for certain empirical facts in the rhythmic organization of a poem. It appears then that the rhythm comes before the metre in the sense that a rhythmic feeling is necessary for us to be able to deduce an underlying metrical structure. However, if we consider rhythm in its more specific meaning, we are bound to accept the previously discussed view that only the metrical regularity of a recurrent pulse can arouse a rhythmic response. Thus, rhythm depends on metre, just as metre depends on rhythm; and in view of such a close reciprocal relationship it becomes almost impossible to distinguish unequivocally between the two.

When Abercrombie maintains that

> metre is rhythm, the variation of which constantly suggests its reference to one ideal pattern; and if this reference is not constantly made in the act of hearing the variable rhythm, there is no metre (1923: 42 footnote);

he almost equates rhythm and metre. For Abercrombie, metre is rhythm in non-free-verse poetry, while his so-called metrical base corresponds to what other metrists (for example, Standop 1989) would regard as the metre proper. Chatman, too, considers metre to be "a species of rhythm" (1965: 12): it is, in his words, "basically *linguistically determined 'secondary rhythm"*" (1965: 29). And Lockemann contrasts metrical rigidity with rhythmic flexibility when he holds that metre is stylized rhythm ("stilisierter Rhythmus" (1960: 15)). If metre, then, is but a rhythmic function (yet, rhythm not necessarily a metrical function), Hrushovski is right to assert that "of course, there are poetic rhythms without any meter" (in Sebeok 1960: 180). This is, however, clearly at variance with Zhirmunskij's bold claim that "there can be no rhythm without metre" (1925, translated 1966: 12). He later explains: "Only our consciousness of the metrical rule, to which we *relate* a given sequence of syllables, creates *rhythm*, i.e., converts the natural alternation of speech stresses into a regular cadence" (1925, translated 1966: 68). The contrast between the opposite views of Hrushovski and Zhirmunskij is partly due to their different objects of investigation: Hrushovski is interested in free verse, whereas Zhirmunskij focuses on the poetic tradition. Although it is impossible for us to reconcile the above opinions, we may come to understand them if we attempt to trace the filigree threads of the gossamer-

like web between rhythm and metre and thereby illuminate part of their mutual relationship.

As we rhythmize a stress-timed language by emphasizing its accentual characteristics, we focus on some stresses as rhythmically significant while neglecting others as rhythmically less significant. This selective approach depends primarily on the linguistic givens of a poem; but it also takes into account our willingness and ability to perceive a metrical structure even where it is not fully supported by the language material. Thus, metre derives from rhythm as the rhythmic potential of a particular verse line is reduced to a binary metrical stress pattern of temporal and, as far as possible, structural regularity. Yet, at the same time, we assume that what we obtained as metrical essence is the cause of our rhythmic experience, so that the existence of rhythm is based on metre. In other words, it is in the metre of a poem that we anticipate the possible variants of an effective rhythmic realization in performance. Poetic rhythm is, then, the realization of a poetic metre[18] that constitutes the poem's rhythmic principle. These considerations justify metrical theory as a valuable means of explaining poetic rhythm, and they make possible the assumption of an underlying metrical stress pattern in free verse (see Chapter 4).

Since rhythm and metre occur simultaneously in variant similarity, they combine to create a tensional effect by thwarting a previously evoked expectation. This effect has been called metrical tension (for example, Attridge 1982), counterpoint (especially, Hopkins 1918), or syncopation (Fowler 1966), but the suggestive force at least of the two musical terms has caused much confusion as to the actual nature of the metro-rhythmic interplay. When Whitehall frankly admits, "I don't feel that counterpoint" (Sebeok 1960: 201), he consciously deserts metrical theory in order to inquire from an unbiased point of view into the experience of listening to a poetic recitation. Attridge also persists in opposition against the idea of a contrapuntal feeling resulting from the simultaneous perception of a rhythmic pattern and a metrical base. "The tension", he writes, "is experienced not between two simultaneously perceived levels, but in the linear progression of the line" (1982: 13). What we feel is a tension that "arises out of the twin tendencies of language, towards variety and towards regularity" (ibid.: 18). Such remarks should caution us against asserting too readily the existence of a contrapuntal tension. It will, however, be shown that in order to understand and accept the above statements by Whitehall and Attridge, we do not need to abandon the notion of counterpoint altogether.

If we wish to comprehend metrical tension, we must go back to a cognitive investigation of the mental processes that relate to the actual reading of a poem. Let us assume the following situation: being acquainted with the poetic tradition and its metres, we are asked to recite a poem, unknown to us, that is composed in a fairly complex iambic pentameter. Whether or not we obtain the metrical information beforehand is of no consequence, since the problem of expressing a poetic rhythm lies not in the metre itself, but in the matchability of metrical pattern and linguistic givens. In a first attempt, we would want to go for the ideal metrical rhythms so as to render the recitation poetical. However, the actual stress patterns of words, determined as they are by lexical, syntactic, and semantic demands, jar with our rhythmic desire for an expression of the metre. We experience the fulfillment of these rhythmic expectations only as long as we are able to feel the metrical pattern through the relative alternation of linguistic stresses as they occur more or less naturally in the

[18] Cf. Whitehall's comment in Sebeok (1960: 201): "I think rhythm is to meter as the allophone is to the phoneme."

process of reading. But when, owing to linguistic unruliness, the harmonization of the two levels is made impossible, we have to cope with a metrical dilemma the solution of which forces us to decide whether to sacrifice the naturalness of the linguistic material to the metre, or whether to do without the effects of a metrical rhythm in order to retain the linguistic stress patterns. It is in this dilemma that we experience metrical counterpoint. As soon as we comply with the necessities of an actual poetry reading and opt for either of the two possibilities according to our preference, we automatically resolve the contrapuntal tension into a unidimensional rhythmic sequence of linguistic elements. This does not mean, however, that a listener experiences a rhythmically smooth recitation: the contrapuntal tension ceases to exist for the reader of a poem in the instant of recitation only to appear to the listener either as a rhythmic tension caused by unmetrical acceleration or retardation in the case of a linguistically natural reading, or as a linguistic tension due to a performance that in opting for the metre violates the lexical or syntactic, and therefore semantic, requirements of the language. The widespread disagreement concerning the question of metrical counterpoint is understandable in view of the fact that, needless to say, the reader of a poem is at the same time also the listener.

Having explained metrical tension or counterpoint in terms of jarring stress patterns, we should not fail to mention that kind of counterpoint which hinges on a discrepancy between the sentence structure and the metrical line. Lineation governs the strictly sequential process of reading in that it interrupts the continual movement of our eyes as they scan along the line from one letter, syllable, or word to the next. This interruption compels us to pause for however short a moment at the end of each line, so that it seems only natural to postulate at line boundaries a metrical break which a poetic performance is supposed to render perceptible. In an enjambment, however, the syntactic patterns rebel against the linear confinement imposed by metrical conventions. Thus, a pause is required where it should not be, and wherever it falls it is out of place. The impact of a run-on line depends on the syntactic boundary after the final syllable: while boundaries of phrase still permit of a minimal pause to be realized in a recitation, lexical or even morphemic (that is, syllabic[19]) boundaries urge the reader to push on, and to ignore the metrical break at the end of the line.[20] The impossibility of satisfying simultaneously the demands of syntax and lineation creates a tension which, in a performance, may be revealed as a vague hesitation so as to indicate in a rather perfunctory manner what metre asks for but

[19] On this distinction see my discussion of the syllable, below.

[20] Consider the effect of enjambment in the following metrical exercise, *Love Poem 16*, which is conceived as a parody of the Spenserian stanza:

So late in life no time for love but bu-
sy read I true knights' fancy for fair dam-
sels, pleasing my imagination ea-
sily with cruel sex and crime to ham-
per help from evil spirits as they gam-
bol between fits of jealousy and pun-
ishment. True heroines provide exam-
ples of you somewhere far above the fun-
damental ecstasy, which only few do shun.

Notice, how the rhymes are rather inconspicuous - not because of their sometimes imperfect vowel quality, but because we do not recognize them in word-initial or word-medial position. It is patent that this most radical form of enjambment, if applied throughout a metrically regular poem, tends to annihilate the numerical aspect of the metre in that it marginalizes the function of the line as a metrical unit almost to the extent of extinction.

does not get. Being the offspring of a clash between two *concrete* systems, the linear-syntactic counterpoint is clearly distinguished from the metrical tension of incongruent stress patterns, which belong to the *abstract* levels of prose rhythm and metrical template.[21] In both cases, however, the resulting perplexity on the part of the reader produces an increasing awareness of the subtleties of poetic rhythm.

A brief comment on the terminology will serve as an appendix to the above discussion of metrical tension. "Counterpoint", "syncopation", and "tension" have different connotations according to their various semantic backgrounds; yet, whichever label is used, they all denote one and the same poetic effect. Hartman, for instance, "prefer[s] 'counterpoint' because this seems to [him] one of the few areas in which really illuminating parallels can be drawn between music and poetry without serious danger of confusion" (1980: 25). This statement is too general to be accepted without further scrutiny as it fails to specify any possible parallels between contrapuntal tensions in music and poetry. While musical counterpoint is characterized by a *melodic* interplay originating in the conjunctive arrangement of two or more melodies according to fixed rules, metrical counterpoint in a verse text deals with the simultaneity of two *rhythmic* levels. The contrapuntal tension in music, it is true, also includes the rhythms of the melodies, but there will only be a rhythmic counterpoint if these rhythms differ from each other. However, there is still a more fundamental difference to be pointed out: whereas musical counterpoint is realized in the actual acoustic event of two or more voices singing or playing together, counterpoint in poetry, whether involving abstract stress patterns or the concrete systems of lineation and syntax, is always, in performance, transformed into some linear rhythmic tension. To produce in poetry a contrapuntal effect reminiscent of that which we experience in music, would require a poem to be recited by two persons simultaneously - one reading in accordance with the natural stress patterns of the language, the other complying with the metre by scanning its regular alternation and observing the pause at the end of a line even in a strong enjambment. On these grounds, we have to admit that the contrapuntal tension of poetry is, indeed, largely incompatible with the principles of musical counterpoint. And yet, we are reluctant to reject the use of the term "counterpoint" in metrics altogether; for the suggestive power of the word, expressing the struggle between two conflicting structures, is too alluring for us to simply dispense with it.

In an attempt to avoid the misleading connotations of "counterpoint", Roger Fowler proposes another musical term, "syncopation". He argues that "in music, disturbance of an established beat by the imposition of a different, or more usually 'unsynchronized' rhythm constitutes syncopation," which finds its poetic parallel in the "disturbance of the metrical beat by prose rhythm" (1966: 95). Although this account sounds rather convincing, there remain reservations regarding the appropriateness of the term since the actual experience of syncopation in music has all but nothing in common with the corresponding feeling aroused in poetry. While the imposition of a different rhythm blurs our emotional awareness of an underlying metrical beat in poetry, such rhythmic disturbance enhances our keen feeling of an underlying metrical beat in music since it is impossible for us to rely on strictly timed rhythms in poetic performance unless the poem is sung. Thus, we would have, for instance, great difficulty in trying to derive rhythmic pleasure from the experience of

[21] Although the level of prose rhythm is often assumed to be concrete rather than abstract (see, for example, Hartman 1980: 181), our discussion of metrical levels, below, will argue in favour of an abstract level of prose rhythm.

reading a poetic text *with natural accentuation* to the monotonous metrical beats of a metronome. It is because the term "syncopation" is so intimately bound up with its corresponding rhythmic feeling in music that we regard it as rather inappropriate when it comes to denoting metrical tension in poetry. To conclude, then, our terminological discussion, we only need to add that "tension" seems to us the most neutral of the names for the metro-rhythmic conflict in poetry: unlike "counterpoint" and "syncopation", it is not burdened with the bias of musical connotations, and though it lacks the expressive force of a word like "counterpoint", it is still sufficiently suggestive of the phenomenon to be described.

In the above discussion, we have written about metre without further reflection on its components or characteristics, and we have taken for granted the reader's previous acquaintance with a concept which is by no means self-evident. We need to ask, then, where does metre come from, and how do we arrive at its abstract remoteness? To answer these questions, let us first examine the linguistic properties that constitute a metrical pattern. In the English language, any sustained utterance can be perceived as a sequence of elements linked together rhythmically by the recurrence of certain articulatory features such as a minimal tracheal pressure and a maximal opening of the vocal canal (see Classe 1939: 40). Thus, we become aware of this perceptual element, the syllable, as forming "the smallest *rhythmic* unit of the language" (Attridge 1982: 60). To be sure, we are neither concerned with grammatical syllables, which correspond more or less to morphemes in syntax, nor do we talk about phonetic syllables, which "differ from a [rhythmic] syllable in so far as, for the purpose of transcription, a phonetic syllable must necessarily be composed of *whole* sounds" (Classe 1939: 39 footnote 1). Consider, by way of illustration, the words "easy" and "funny": while a rhythmic syllabification will probably produce constructions like "ea-sy" and "fun-ny", the grammatical and phonetic splitting would turn out as "eas-y" and "/ /", respectively. Rhythmic syllables are far from being defined within clear boundaries, but they are "easily recognized, and [in metrics] the problem of identifying their boundaries rarely matters" (Chatman 1965: 39). What matters is the number of syllables in a metrical unit. In order to create rhythmic variety without spoiling the numerical patterns of the metre, poets make allowance for syllabic suppression either through vocalic elision, as in syncope and apocope, or through coalescence of vowels, as in synaeresis and synaloepha. The not infrequent use of these techniques reveals the central function of the syllable in the metrical organization of a poem.[22]

Among the syllabic characteristics which are relevant to the establishment of a metre, we can single out stress as a mainly extrinsic notion that, owing to the stress-timed nature of the English language, has acquired the utmost significance. In spoken speech, stress causes a syllable to become salient in that it exploits the combinatory possibilities of all phonological features with regard to a desired perceptual effect of syllabic prominence in a given context. The varying degrees of this prominence must be conceived as a continuum, since the correlates of stress - pitch, loudness, duration, and quality of sound - present us with an innumerable variety of combinations. While we might claim a tendency in spoken language for some combinations to be more likely than others to constitute stress,[23] we must not adopt this view as an inviolable

[22] Cf. Chatman's fundamental statement: "The metrical events correspond to linguistic syllables" (1965: 13).

[23] Thus, in most cases, a high syllable will be more prominent than a low-pitched syllable; a long syllable will be more prominent than a short syllable; a loud syllable will be more prominent than a

rule. In an elaborate philosophical discussion of stress as a notion in time, Oliver (1989) shows in a convincing manner that our perception of a syllable as prominent depends too much on its context for us to assign any definite stress merely on the basis of a certain combination of syllabic features. These important insights, obtained from observation of actual speech, must always be kept in the back of our minds as we now continue to discuss stress on more theoretical grounds.

The complexity of the phenomenon of stress and our inability to exactly predict and specify its intensity does not keep linguists and metrists from trying to identify and describe syllabic prominence theoretically. While absolute degrees of stress - though unlimited in number because of the indivisible stress continuum - may not exceed the physical capacities of those organs that are responsible for phonological emphasis in spoken language, relative degrees of stress may amount to an accentual structure without end if we acknowledge the validity of syntactic constituents for the rule-governed assignment of stress.[24] Whether we obtain stress as the result of an operation of generative rules (see, for example, Halle/ Keyser 1971), or more conventionally by means of syllabic classification,[25] we always have to go back to our rather intuitive knowledge of the English language as it is actually spoken and heard. Since our subjective experience of stress must needs be variant, it is not advisable to postulate that absolute stress levels are relevant to any theory of metre.[26] What counts most in the process of linking linguistic and metrical stress is the relativity of syllabic prominence as established between adjacent syllables (see Standop 1989: 45), where the juxtaposition of rhythmic features is experienced most immediately. In the ensuing difference between pairs of opposites lies the continuously pulsating cell from which poetic rhythm emerges organically, and from which, therefore, all metrical theory should burgeon forth to inform our minds with an understanding of rhythmic experience in poetry.

Our desire to comprehend the emotional effects conveyed by poetic rhythm urges us to look out for linguistic cues that might confirm our initial rhythmic impression. If a prosaic reading of the verse text does not provide a sufficiently regular stress distribution, we must try to regularize the accentual alternation by manipulating the rhythmic givens. While the process of rhythmization provides the temporal basis for

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soft syllable; and a syllable with an articulate syllabic nucleus will be more prominent than a syllable containing a reduced vowel. For the prevalence of some stress cues over others, see, for example, Attridge (1982: 63).

[24] Halle/ Vergnaud explain: "The difficulty of placing an upper bound on the number of degrees of stress that need to be distinguished derives from the fact that there is no upper bound on the depth of syntactic embedding of a phrase. [....] However, if there can be no upper limit on the depth of embedding, then there can be no upper bound either on the number of degrees of stress that may need to be distinguished. This conclusion is, of course, not affected by the fact that no speaker has ever successfully distinguished more than ten or twelve or twenty-seven different degrees of stress" (1987: 37-38).

[25] Thus, Chatman writes: "Our classificatory purposes are well served by distinguishing between four different sorts of syllables, or more accurately, syllabic *weights*: **a)** full-vowel monosyllabic words, **b)** stressed syllables of polysyllabic words, **c)** unstressed full-vowel syllables of polysyllabic words, and **d)** unstressed reduced (degraded) syllables of polysyllabic words" (1965: 123).

[26] Bräuer's (1964) concept of tone levels ("Tonstufen" (13)) fails to convince (as Jost (1976: 139) amply demonstrates) because it reflects the author's subjective impression of absolute stress (see 5-6) without any further theoretical justification. (It is, at this point in our discussion, of no consequence that Bräuer deals only with German verse.) Even the more subtle idea of a "stress threshold" (Weismiller in Kiparsky/ Youmans 1989: 263), according to which certain degrees of relative linguistic stress will invariably receive metrical stress, represents a principle too rigid to account for the necessity of metrical compliance with the contextual exigencies of a verse text.

the establishment of a metre in that it implies a consequent utilization of the principle of isochrony, our awareness of a structural patterning of relatively weak and strong stresses in the syllabic sequence of a metrical unit (such as the line) lays the foundation for a theoretical description - and, thus, for a recognition - of metre. For metre is rhythmic comprehension only through our ability to discover regular time *within* the more or less regular structures of stress patterns. Any metrical system that ignores either of these essential components is insufficient and, therefore, unsatisfactory. The duality of metre, however, does not exclude the possibility of focusing on stress patterns while only implying the significance of their temporal distribution.

When it comes to choosing a metrical template and imposing it on all the lines of a poem, we depend upon a constant intuitive reflection on how a particular line *could* be read without spoiling the sense of it altogether.[27] Thus, we look for a semantic niche among the restrictions of syntax and morphology in order to accommodate the textual needs - in conformity with their potential readability - to the requirements of an ideal metre. The problem, here, is not so much a stretching of the principle of relativity,[28] but rather the assessment of stress in the linguistic material to be metrically analysed. For example, the question whether a monosyllabic modifier can be stressed in a position before the equally monosyllabic noun it modifies, and which in the process becomes metrically unstressed - this question must be answered in the affirmative, as semantics generally permits of the defining and contrasting function of a modifier in relation to its modified grammatical counterpart.[29] Thus, in the noun phrase, "the black cat", adjectival prominence would imply a reference to a phrase like "the white cat". Such semantic changes can be invoked metrically if a strong regular metre requires emphasis on the modifier; however, the interpretative significance of this shift in meaning may be qualified by the semantic context. Passing in review the process of establishing a metre, we should stress that the imaginative reading, or *test reading*, which patterns the ground of our metrical edifice need not be acceptable as an actual reading in performance. The necessity of referring to such a metrically abstract reading as distinct from a recitation can be the cause of much metrical confusion unless we are constantly, and at every stage in a metrical analysis, aware of the theoretical level on which we operate.

The differentiation between three or four levels of description is essential in order for metrical theory to be able to provide irrefutable insights into the workings of poetic rhythm. In the following, we will examine two different concepts of level distinction in metrical theory. Roman Jakobson speaks of *verse instance* and *verse design* to denote the invariable correlation between the actual line of a poem and its underlying metrical pattern. In this correlative relationship, "the verse design determines the invariant features of the verse instances and sets up the limits of variations" (Jakobson in Sebeok 1960: 364). Thus, a prospective line of verse is

[27] This is what Chatman implies when he states that "the metre of any poem is best described as the matrix of all meaningful scansions" (1965: 104).

[28] This principle can, for instance, in an iambic pentameter be exploited to the extent that only one of two adjacent syllables of a metrically stressed syllable needs to be less prominent; or, vice versa, only one of two adjacent syllables of a metrically unstressed syllable needs to be more prominent. It will be noticed that these are the implications of the Stress Maximum Rule as devised by Halle/ Keyser (1971: 169).

[29] This corresponds to the third of four rules by which Roger Fowler discovers the distribution of ictus and non-ictus in an English poem. Rule III defines quite exhaustively all the possible circumstances under which "the 'normal' pitch-stress contours [....] can be optionally overridden" (1968: 301).

supposed to conform to certain rules by which the verse design outlines the metrical scope of a set of corresponding verse instances. In Jakobson's concept, as we understand it, verse represents a metrical constant both in its instance and in its design. Yet, while the first is concrete in its presence on the page, the second must be regarded as abstract.[30] The notion of delivery, on the other hand, constitutes - in its instance as well as in its design - a metrical variable, since neither the actual performance of a poem nor the performer's underlying concept of the scansion proper can be fully predicted from the invariant givens of verse instance and verse design. It is, therefore, evident that the study of poetic recitations cannot yield a *general* understanding of the rhythms of poetry; for the performance detaches itself from the poem in the act of performing, and becomes a concrete and unique event in its own right.

Ewald Standop similarly exhorts us not to confuse the metrical description of a line with any of its actualizations.[31] His metrical system consists of four different levels (see Standop 1989: 32-36): level M ("Metrum"), which represents the underlying metrical pattern; level S ("Sprache"), where we consider the prose rhythm of a line; level MS, which combines the two previous levels in order to be able to reveal in one description the tensional effects between prose rhythm and metre; and, finally, level R ("Realisation"), where we distinguish between various possible performances. These levels are abstract by dint of their descriptive function (Standop uses the word "Beschreibungsebene"), for a description can only coincide with an abstract phenomenon but never with reality. Thus, levels M and S are abstract *per se* since they depict the ideal patterns of metre and prose rhythm,[32] while level R - in that it gives an approximate description of possible realizations - fails to be concrete only because of the limitations of its symbolic expression. This distinction between the abstract concepts underlying levels M and S, and the actual events serving as a base to level R, is criterial when it comes to comparing Standop's four-level system with the Jakobsonian concept of verse design, verse instance, delivery design, and delivery

[30] Roman Jakobson's characterization of metre, or verse design, as "far from being an abstract, theoretical scheme" (in Sebeok 1960: 364) emphasizes the intimate reciprocal relationship between the metre and the verse line. Yet, what may not always be invariably derived from a concrete given cannot be concrete itself but must necessarily belong to the realm of abstraction. That metre, then, is an abstract, theoretical concept is sufficiently proved by the prevailing disagreement among metrists. Roger Fowler points insinuatively in the same direction when he remarks: "In view of the fact that verse instances are based on linguistic entities (sentences capable of full phonetic realization), Jakobson's denial that verse design is an 'abstract, theoretical scheme' is apposite - with the qualification that design is often relatively far removed from the particularities of utterance" (1968: 288). (A shrewd observer might point out that, according to the above argumentation, the recitation of a poem would also have to be abstract as it cannot be invariably derived from the concrete material of the verse text. But an even shrewder observer would answer that the performative variable hinges on the theoretical concept of the sum of all possible performances, whereas an actual reading becomes concrete by dint of its independent acoustic existence as distinct from the visual existence of a poem on the page.)

[31] He writes: "Es ist immer wieder daran zu erinnern, daß sich die besten Verse einerseits skandieren, aber andererseits auch in Prosa auflösen lassen. Somit ist es sinnlos, Realisationen (das Lesen, den Vortrag einzelner Personen) zum Maßstab metrischer Beschreibungen machen zu wollen" (1989: 32). While other metrists also emphasize the importance of a distinction between abstract metre and actual performance (see, for example, Chatman (1965: 103-104), Heusler (1956, vol. I: 6), Youmans (in Kiparsky/ Youmans 1989: 350), Zhirmunskij (1925, translated 1966: 19)), Standop is, perhaps, most successful in maintaining a clear distinction between the theoretical levels throughout his metrical practice.

[32] Note that prose rhythm must needs be considered an abstraction, because the verse text yields innumerable options for a prosaic rendition.

instance. While level M in Standop's system is practically congruent with Jakobson's verse design (the only difference being the descriptive formalization of the former), and while each variant on level R represents a particular delivery instance and reflects the underlying delivery design; a comparison of level S with the verse instance reveals only a vague correspondence between the two on account of the not unequivocal theoretical implications of verse instance. From our point of view, the verse instance is concrete only in its visuality; its implied acoustic counterpart is an abstraction derived from the line as it is written on the page.[33] This abstraction - if it is assumed to take place *before* the features determined by the underlying verse design are allowed to percolate through to the level of verse instance[34] - represents the ideal prose rhythm pattern of the line, and thus corresponds to level S. On the basis of the theoretical insights obtained in the above discussion, let us now erect our own edifice of the abstract and concrete levels pertaining to metrical theory.

The facts are patent: a written verse text is being transformed by means of a human voice into an utterance, the actual performance of the text.[35] This process of transformation involves a set of cognitive variables, for the mental comprehension of which metrical analysis must go beyond the firm ground of concrete givens and construct a theoretical framework that will link the starting point of the process of transformation with its end. Metrics is concerned with the explanation of rhythm in poetry. Since our rhythmic experience is based on our perception of the phonological features in a poem, metrics hinges on phonology. As a corollary, then, we first draw from the actual text its implied phonological pattern of prose rhythm. Although this inference cannot be said to be wholly unequivocal, its range of possible fluctuations is sufficiently narrow to allow their collective integration. In an additional theoretical step, we may *describe* the implied prose rhythm. Parallel to the establishment of a rhythmic pattern according to morpho-syntactic rules, the assumption of a metre is derived from the regularity of some main characteristics in the prose rhythm. Note that metre is not immediately connected to the actual text in its visual dimension except that its existence is already suggested, or even prescribed, by the lineation on the page. The description of metre, then, in an elaborate system of structural and temporal features, is at the core of metrical theory. A combination of this descriptive level with that of prose rhythm is optional but recommendable: unless the description of their conjoined features becomes too complex to be readily grasped, such an

[33] We are not concerned, here, with purely oral poetry where the verse instance can be kept apart from its corresponding delivery instance only by the psychological distance between the listener and the performer.

[34] Jakobson's concept of verse instance can also be understood to include the characteristics of verse design. Thus, Roger Fowler considers verse instance to be "the quality of a line which will emerge for a reader who has an adequate metrical set as he interprets adequately the syntax of the line" (1968: 294). The ensuing complexity of the concept of verse instance, however, renders it even more difficult for metrical analysis to distinguish between concrete and abstract levels.

[35] The perspective adopted here is that of the reader of a poem. Viewed from a different angle, a written verse text and the actual performance of that text can also be regarded as mutually independent implementations of an underlying poetic ideal. As Roger Fowler (1966: 9) explains: "The distinction is not between the poem on paper and the reading of it but between the poem (an abstraction) and two ways of realizing it." In the act of writing, the poet, it is true, has a clear idea of the sound image conveyed by the graphics on the page, so that the poem, *in statu nascendi*, exists simultaneously in a visual as well as acoustic form. However, from a more practical point of view, most performances of poetry depend on the written text: even a poet usually *reads* his or her poetry off the page.

integrative approach will serve to illustrate the functioning of metrical counterpoint.[36] It must be stressed again, however, that the contrapuntal findings are by no means binding on the concrete acoustic event of an actual performance. Metrical theory can only determine the range of possible performances and, perhaps, make some appear more favourable than others. Yet, the final choice is left with the performer.

It may be helpful to present the above system of concrete and abstract levels in the following synoptic collocation (in which we have retained Standop's choice of capitals for the denotation of the various levels in order to avoid confusion):

level:	syntactic rhythm	metre	recitation
	S (MS)	M	R
	prose rhythm described	ideal/ applied[37] metre described	actual performance described
abstract	prose rhythm implied	ideal/ applied metre assumed	(possible performances)
		test reading	
concrete	verse text		actual performance
	visual		acoustic

Note the central role played by continually repeated test readings, which serve to probe the metrical capacity of the verse text. Furthermore, test reading becomes indispensable in our endeavour to prevent a complete detachment of metre from the actual events on the page and in a performance.[38] It constitutes the means by which we constantly control the appropriateness, and thus the effectiveness, of an underlying metrical pattern. The central question of test reading is, whether we are able to reconcile in a poem the accentual structures of language with a possible metre; and if so, to what extent this reconciliation requires the support of a modulating voice in performance. Take, for instance, the opening lines of Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

> Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit
> Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
> Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
> [....]

The iambic pentameter is perfect only in the second line where the linguistic stress pattern is reflected directly and without exception by the regular alternation of metrical non-stress and metrical stress. Lines 1 and 3 contain linguistically prominent monosyllables that require metrical demotion ("first", "Brought"), as well as minor syllables that need to be promoted in metre ("and", "in*to*"). A test reading probes the feasibility of metrical demotion and promotion by attempting their performative

[36] In fact, most traditional metrists utilize this integrative level - however, too often without realizing its theoretical status. In Standop's words: "Die metrische Literatur macht gewöhnlich den Kardinalfehler, explizit oder implizit von vornherein R an die Stelle von MS zu setzen" (1989: 35).

[37] The distinction between an ideal and an applied metre is only relevant in a context that requires more than one metrical possibility on level M. We may, for example, accept the so-called trochaic inversion in the first foot of an iambic pentameter as a variation of the metre (see Standop 1989: 43-44) rather than regarding it as a jarring pattern on the level of prose rhythm. Thus, any possible variation or deviation of an ideal metre represents an applied metre, which underlies the stress patterns of a particular verse line.

[38] The importance of an actual reading for the establishment of a metrical pattern has also been emphasized by Walter Bernhart (1995: 437), who points out that "only in enacting a form of temporalization (mentally or physically) is it possible to identify a certain mode of temporalization, namely, a meter."

realization without spoiling the sense suggested in the prose rhythm. To this end, the voice must utilize the possibilities of vocal stress modulation, which are inherent in the constitutive stress features. For example, the linguistically prominent word "first" could be rendered metrically unstressed by using pitch and duration as a means of accentual emphasis, whereas the adjacent metrical stresses - "man's" and "*dis*obedience" - would have to be based on loudness and intensity. In practice, test reading consists in a scansional perusal of the poetic text during which constant attention is being paid to linguistic workability.

If we were to assign different degrees of abstractness to the three main levels in the above diagram, it would become obvious that level R could almost be regarded as solely concrete. The only means of keeping it in the sphere of theory are relatively insignificant, since the abstractions involved in describing an actual performance and assuming a set of possible performances do not affect the principally concrete status of the performative level. The variability of performance renders the theoretical assumption of an implied performance (comparable to the implied prose rhythm) practically impossible.[39] Not only does metre multiply the stylistic options for a recitation of the text, but, what is more, the paralinguistic features in a performance are largely unaccountable. Although we might classify the vocal nuances of which a performer is capable, it will never be possible to determine the voice of a poem linguistically. Particularly, the semantic dimension will always be too vague for us to infer a general meaning and recover its appropriate shade of voice. Thus, paralinguistic features come into existence only in the concrete event of an actual performance, and remain practically irrelevant to the establishment of a metre (see also Fowler 1968: 319-320).

Having contextualized the concept of metre within its larger theoretical framework, we may now proceed to discuss the significance of the various constituents in a metrical structure. The verse line is the central metrical unit in poetry, which in its concrete presence on the page demarcates unambiguously certain syllabic sequences and their stress patterns. It constitutes the focal point where the intralinear rhythms - sometimes metrically described in terms of feet and hemistiches - culminate in temporary suspension; and whence a metrical superstructure of rhymed couplet, stanza, and whole poem is bound to burgeon forth. A verse poem may lack all these metrical units except the line;[40] for here is that unavoidable movement which heightens our awareness of the text in that it sets its obvious artificiality against the naturalness of syntax. Whether lineation runs across the syntactic patterns, or reinforces them in meek compliance: the poetic line always conveys some kind of magical power by which it signifies condensery[41] and the linguistic elevation of the poem above all non-poetic texts.

While the metrical units above the line are in most cases easily recognized,[42] the perceptual existence of the metrical foot is rather doubtful. Its general acceptance in traditional metrics should not blind us to the fact that our rhythmic experience is completely independent of the assumption of a metrical unit whose boundaries are without linguistic relevance. The foot can at best serve as a convenient descriptive

[39] For a different view, see my discussion of performance, below.
[40] A poem that is not composed in lines is a prose poem.
[41] The term is Lorine Niedecker's (1970: 90).
[42] However, there may be doubts whether we should regard unequal visual sections as stanzas, or whether the rhymed couplet ought necessarily to consist of pairs of metrically compatible lines ending in full rhymes.

notion.[43] And yet, some metrical analyses *seem* to demonstrate that the foot is indispensable to our recognition of certain rhythmic phenomena. Thus, Roger Fowler sets great store on the role played by foot boundaries when he claims the significance of "an accentual effect produced by the overrun of metrical boundaries by grammatical units" (in Fowler 1966: 95). Whenever, for instance, a disyllable with word-initial stress is fitted into an iambic pattern, it creates "a type of syncopation" (ibid.) as it must needs run across the boundary between two metrical feet. However, while we would agree with Roger Fowler that the above constellation produces undoubtedly *some* rhythmic effect, we feel that neither the description of the phenomenon under scrutiny as "syncopation", nor its explanation in terms of violated foot boundaries is appropriate to our perception-oriented view of the matter.[44] We propose, therefore, a different approach to the analysis of the above rhythmic effect.

As psychological experiments have shown and subjective introspection will vaguely confirm, an iambic metre feels rhythmically different from a trochaic metre. While durational differences in a regularly alternating sound sequence will produce the impression of an iambic rhythm, differences of intensity will be perceived as trochaic.[45] Our perceptual experience of rising and falling stress patterns in disyllabic grammatical units functions accordingly.[46] Thus, given the experimental evidence mentioned above, a series of falling stress groups in an iambic line is likely to have a slight *stringendo* effect, not because in the movement from one metrical unit to the next the hurdle of a foot boundary is run over rather than being taken in a leap, but because our perception of the falling rhythms urges us to soften the iambic lilt by reducing the effect of the durational component in ictic prominence to the advantage of intensity. And, vice versa, the intrusion of rising patterns within the context of a trochaic metre may cause the steady flow of the line to be momentarily arrested in its ictus. However, it is important to note that these considerations are purely abstract in their comparison of metrical and rhythmical characteristics on levels M and S, respectively. Although the theoretical effects described will certainly contribute to an overall performative design, they are easily overridden by more conspicuous phonological features, so that in an actual performance the contrast of falling rhythms in an iambic scheme will often go unnoticed.[47] The varying conspicuousness of rhythmic stress groups whose movement runs counter to that of the metrical feet but

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[43] See, for example, Abercrombie (1923: 103), Chatman (1965: 117), and Fowler (1968: 292). In an interesting discussion of the metrical foot, Derek Attridge comes to the conclusion that "at best, [...] the division of lines into feet adds nothing, at worst it hinders accurate analysis of the metrical variations which all readers perceive" (1982: 17).

[44] Note that the analytic comparison between the positions of word boundaries and foot-boundaries seems to be quite natural in discussions of German poetry. (See, for example, Lockemann (1960: 117-131), who puts the rhythms of the grammatical units ("Wortfüße") to the fore and analyses them against the background of the underlying metre; and also Storz (1970: 44-52), who rather emphasizes the notion of the metrical foot.) This apparent naturalness may have something to do with the German tradition of metrical criticism, but it also reflects the fact that German is more highly polysyllabic than English.

[45] More detailed accounts of this perceptual distinction can be found, for example, in Attridge (1982: 112), Chatman (1965: 26-27), and Tsur (1977: 88-89).

[46] Attridge is right to warn us, however, that "to equate 'iambic' [....] with 'rising', and 'trochaic' [....] with 'falling', is to confuse metrical structure with metrical style" (1982: 109). This confusion is precisely the major defect of Beardsley's otherwise interesting analysis of grammatical linkage within the line (in Wimsatt 1972: 242-245).

[47] Derek Attridge gives an apposite statement on the matter when he writes: "It is often illuminating to examine a poet's use of the rhythmic grouping of words and phrases, though there is a dangerous temptation to be oversubtle in such analyses" (1982: 110).

without violating the alternating stress pattern of the metre - this conspicuousness is relative to the kind of grammatical linkage within the grouping: the strong syllabic connection in a disyllable is rhythmically more prominent than the grammatical combination of two monosyllables. In this way, the different shapes of words and phrases create very subtle rhythmic variations on the theme of a given metre.

The distinction between the two kinds of grammatical linkage, intralexical and interlexical, can also play a significant part in our perception of the metrical complexity of a verse line. Thus, in an iambic metre, the *lexical* realization of a rising stress pattern by a phrase consisting of two monosyllables will thwart our *metrical* expectation of a reverse pattern to a lesser extent than the *lexical* realization by a disyllable of a rising stress pattern.[48] There is clear statistical evidence that the latter infringement is metrically far less acceptable than the former - the respective ratio of their occurrence being approximately 1:80, according to the painstaking investigations by Marina Tarlinskaja.[49] The obvious explanation for this discrepancy is that intralexical stress patterns are felt to be less pliable, when it comes to approximating the metrical ideal in a test reading, than the stress patterns of monosyllabic phrases. We may claim for English verse what Zhirmunskij observes with regard to Russian verse, namely, that

> a monosyllabic word, even one with a full lexical meaning, can in a syntactic construction be subordinated to the predominating syntactic stress of the adjacent word [....] while a disyllabic or a polysyllabic word [....] has so precise a hierarchy of prosodic elements within the word itself as to render impossible any toning down - in line with metrical conformity - of the hypermetrical stress. (1925, translated 1966: 66)

In other words, monosyllables - unlike polysyllables - can be metrically adjusted according to their relative syntactic position. Because of their rigidity, the stress patterns of polysyllables are "metre-fixing", whereas monosyllables can be regarded as "metre-fixed" owing to their relative accentual flexibility (see Bjorklund in Kiparsky/ Youmans 1989: 170). We should point out that to explain the metrical significance of a distinction between the same intralexical and intraphrasal stress patterns does not require the theoretical assumption of a metrical foot. It is rather the principle of relative stress in combination with the constraints of grammatical linkage that may yield the key to grammetrical problems.

While the distribution within the line of the smaller syntactic units - such as words or short phrases - is clearly a feature of the prose rhythm on level S, and thus represents one of the implied rhythmic characteristics that are supposed to vie with the metrical patterns for dominance in an actual performance; the arrangement of the larger syntactic groups - such as long phrases, clauses, and sentences - may, in some verse forms, render useful the inclusion of an intralinear break even in the metrical scheme on level M. A caesura in the middle of the line should be regarded as metrically compulsory, for example, in the iambic hexameter of an English Alexandrine;[50] or in Poulter's Measure, whose seeming unwieldiness is easily

[48] In principle, these findings might also apply to trochaic verse; yet, owing to its rigidity, the trochaic line generally disallows both kinds of metrical violation.
[49] See Attridge (1982: 265) for more details and bibliographical references.
[50] See, for example, Standop (1989: 121-122). Saintsbury demands with regard to the Alexandrine: "You must observe caesura in reading" (1961, vol. II: 99). We are not in a position to deny

resolved into a short metre, if we turn the medial caesuras into additional line-endings.[51] Iambic pentameter is quite a different case: its altering rigidity of form throughout history makes the general assumption of a metrical caesura after the fourth or fifth or sixth syllable impossible.[52] And yet, to treat the caesural position in a decasyllabic line as though it were a metrical requirement, presupposes at least a stylistic preference for the rhythmic patterns generated by the caesura in a possible performance. If we were to accept the idea of a metrically fixed caesura in any strict iambic pentameter, we would have to specify the possible positions of a syntactic break and their order of priority. In a comparison of levels M and S, the type of syntactic boundary would enable us to distinguish between different degrees of caesural aptitude. On the other hand, if we were to confine in a more flexible iambic pentameter the role of the caesura to the level of prose rhythm, we would, it is true, be no longer able to make, on the basis of syntactic considerations, any pronouncements as to the metricality of a particular pentameter line, but this theoretical restriction need by no means affect our metrical analysis of the rhythmic effect created by the juncture between a syntactic rhythm and its underlying metre.

In the above discussion, we have regarded the caesura as a syntactic phenomenon inherent in the implied prose rhythm of a verse text, and we have shown that, in some cases, the caesural effect might even be included in the underlying metrical scheme. In an actual performance, however, the realization of a caesural pause depends not only on the syntactic context but also on the disposition of the performer, or, in Jakobson's terminology, on his or her delivery design. It is this incalculable vagueness of actualization which induces Chatman to reject the caesura as a syntactic entity, and to maintain that its only existence is in performance (see Chatman in Sebeok 1960: 165-167). Such fundamental scepticism would imply that only the actual realization of a caesural pause may have an impact on our rhythmic experience of a poem, since the perception of poetic rhythm is but a matter of idiosyncratic choice. Yet, it is not altogether impossible to account for the caesura as a grammatical given, if we carefully explore the basis of textual potentiality for any common rhythmic recognition of syntactic features within the prose rhythm on level S. The clear possibility of its rhythmic recognition vindicates the grammatical caesura as significant to our perception of poetic rhythm. Although, in a recitation, the observance of syntactic signals is, more or less, within the discretion of the performer, we should beware of assuming their general rhythmic unaccountability in metrical theory.

To be sure, the question of accountability is of utmost significance when it comes to selecting the textual and performative characteristics which would be regarded as essential to an adequate metrical description of the poetic rhythm. For a theory must needs prescind from some features in order to render others comprehensible. It will leave out of consideration those characteristics which pertain solely to level R and change in every performance, and it will focus on those features whose performative inconstancy is considered to range only within the strictest limits. Moreover, metrical practicability - both in terms of reasonable degrees of complexity as well as in terms

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categorically the possibility of minor exceptions to the rule of a mid-line caesura in the English Alexandrine; yet, it seems that not to include a caesural restriction in the definition of this metre would result in too lax a characterization.

[51] On Poulter's Measure and its possible transformation, see Standop (1989: 123-124).

[52] Egerton Smith (1923: 27-28), however, quotes Puttenham and Gascoigne to demonstrate the theoretical demand for a caesura in the sixteenth century.

of representability in a metrical description - comes to be a very crucial factor in the assessment of a theory's applicability.[53] And to boot, we have to acknowledge the uncertain feasibility of the above criteria regarding their differentiation and practical implementation. If a metrical theory is to represent an insightful as well as balanced analytical tool, the metrist must take special care of those metrical characteristics which in the selective reductionism of the theoretical framework may have to be neglected for the sake of clarity. The fact that no theory can ever do justice to the reality which it tries to illuminate leaves ample scope for all kinds of scathing criticism. However, we hold it to be much more profitable for our own metrical concept to assume at least a grain of truth in all theories of metre, and to regard the metrical heritage principally from an inclusive point of view ("both...and...") rather than pressing for one alternative ("either...or...").

It is no use taking sides in the controversial discussion about the metrical relevance of time and stress, since both features are equally significant for the perception of metre in English verse. While the "timers" emphasize the importance of uniform periods (comparable to the bar in music) and sometimes even employ musical notation or an equivalent set of symbols to describe the temporal relations that are supposed to govern our rhythmic experience of a verse line, the "stressers" consider the spatial distribution of syllabic accents to be the rhythmically most influential component since the stress alternation constitutes the primordial patterns of prose rhythm and metre. The distinction between the two approaches lies basically in their different *interpretation* of rhythmic responses to a poetic event, not in a difference of the responses themselves.[54] Thus, we may conclude that those metrical aspects which one theory would regard as crucial, are most likely to form an integral part in the scheme of another theory with contrary premises. While the stress-based theories rely on lexical and syntactic prominence of syllables as the most immediate characteristic to be abstracted from the concrete verse text on the page, the temporal approaches go one step further in that they derive an isochronic pattern from those accentual features which they deem to be metrically relevant. "Stressers" may sometimes appear crude in their down-to-earth analyses of stress patterns, but they benefit from their adherence to the comparatively straightforward connection between the syllable and its relative prominence - a characteristic which renders the stress-based approaches in most cases thoroughly reconstructable. "Timers", on the other hand, run the risk of losing touch with the invariables of the text, when they concede to arbitrariness what ought to be kept under strict linguistic control.

A metrical study in which "measurements are held to depend on time-periods rather than syllables" (Omond 1903: xii), should carefully define the process by which it arrives at the segmentation of a verse line. If a theory fails to provide this sound and reconstructable basis for its application, we will have to dismiss it as impracticable even though most of its underlying assumptions may be extremely valuable and reveal a deep insight into the matter under discussion. Omond's *A Study of Metre* is a case in point. Despite the validity of his argument in favour of isochronous metrical units, we cannot be satisfied with the vagueness of a basic

[53] Chatman's credo is telling: "I take the position that the metrist's function is not to find out how many kinds of feet there are, but rather to ensure that there aren't any more kinds than necessary" (1965: 14).

[54] Walter Jost (1976: 63) quotes Thomson: "We must not assume too readily that theorists who *appear* to differ do so in reality. I have been struck by the fact that some who hold a counter-theory to mine read just as I do."

statement like the following about the ultimate subjectivity of isochrony and its metrical consequences:

> Equality of periods cannot be directly demonstrated. The very existence of such divisions, much more their exact length, is matter less for *a priori* dogmatism than for testing by experiment. The reader must verify it by his own ear. Still, if time govern metre - which no critic will deny - there must be units of time, and the very definition of rhythm suggests that these units are equal. (1903: 4)

As Omond's examples show, there are no clear rules regarding the linear division into periods: although some relation between a possible stress pattern and the temporal segmentation of a line is discernible, we are unable to specify the nature of this relation as it is almost entirely dependent on the author's individual perception of poetic rhythms. Not that Omond is unaware of the distinction between metrical concept and actual performance ("[the pause we make in reading] is a very different matter from that integral and necessary pause which forms a constituent part of the line itself" (1903: 8)), but his intuitive analysis renders the possible variability of the patterns on level M as complex and unaccountable as the possible variability of actual performances, so that Omond's approach is *de facto* based on a performative fallacy. The splitting of syllables on the boundary between two periods (see Omond 1903: 79-80), for instance, is too idiosyncratic a device for us to be able to recognize it as a general feature underlying all possible realizations of a particular line. And similarly, the integration of pause[55] into metrical structure - not in order to compensate for irregularities in the number of syllables,[56] but to allow for a temporal significance of syntactic breaks in the metrical description of poetic rhythm - must be discarded as metrically unsound and confusing, since it will often convey the absurd impression that a metre "is sometimes not fully realized even in those cases where it does appear to be" (Crombie 1987: 43). However, the temporal dimension of a metrical concept should underscore, and not invalidate, the regularity of the stress patterns in a verse line.

A theory of metre which imposes on the syllabic strings in poetry a template that fails to account for each of the elements within a string, is liable to produce an equivocal interpretation of the poetic rhythm. In his concept of metre, Richard Cureton proposes a metrical hierarchy whose horizontal projection of measures is determined by the distribution of beats with equal intensity. A stronger beat will initiate a larger measure than a weaker beat, and their representation in a dot grid reveals the rigidity of the hierarchical structure in its vertical and horizontal dimensions. Cureton contends that,

> because of the structural uniformity of metre, most metrical response must stand in an oblique relation to the actual structure of phenomenal prominences in a rhythmic medium, and therefore, in this sense, meter is relatively 'abstract' (in the sense 'self-generating' and 'self-

[55] Note that it is important to differentiate between the structural notion of caesura and its purely temporal counterpart, the pause.

[56] Standop (1989) demonstrates how pause is inevitable in the metrical description of a line whose metrically required ending is not linguistically realized. Syllabic irregularity in the middle of a line is usually accounted for by the rhythmic adaptation of the linguistic material within the measure.

> perpetuating'). Few phenomena in our experience are strictly duple or triple in structure; therefore, our metrical response to most phenomena must be maintained more by suggestion from the rhythmic medium than by direct causation. (1992: 129)

As opposed to this concept of a strict separation between the rhythmic medium and its metre, we argue that only the continuous vacillation between textual and metrical patterns - as detachment in amalgamation and amalgamation in detachment - can finally produce an illusion of the stability necessary to erect a theoretical edifice of metrical structure. The rigidity of metre is not entirely independent of the rhythmic variations in a verse text. Despite the neglect of the intimate relationship between the syllabic rhythms and their metrical explanation, Cureton's concept of metre reveals some interesting insights into the interlinear rhythms of metrically duple-structured poems; and it also illuminates the phenomenon of compensation through silent beats in the triple-stress lines of a four-beat metre.[57] Arbitrariness, however, comes into play when metrically less regular poems are subjected to the otherness of a self-contained metre. If the metrical pattern is too independent of the syllabo-rhythmic givens, it will fail to provide a clearly reconstructable basis for the varying rhythms of a metrically irregular verse text. Furthermore, the relative independence of syllabic sequence and metrical beats disallows their direct comparison in terms of matches and mismatches, and thus renders almost impossible the description of an immediate metrical counterpoint.

A poetic metre can only be as free as the linguistic material from which it is derived. There is no use trying to impose on a verse text the physical strictness of absolute time. In order for the abstract metrical patterns to become effective, we must be able to imbue them with a perceptually regular version of the rhythmized linguistic stress patterns. Thus, the temporal component is basic to all operations within the

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[57] Cureton (1992: 130) gives the following example:

No more pencils, no more books
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. .
. . . .
. . . .
No more teacher's ugly looks,
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. .
. . .
. . . . . .
No more things that bring us sorrow,
.
.
. .
. . . .
. . . .
'Cos we won't be here tomorrow.
.
. .
. . .
. . . . . .

Here, the metre does not stop at line-endings but, at the sixth level of beating, comprises in one measure the poem as a whole. Yet, such an inclusive extension of the measure is possible only in poems with a pervasive duple structure.

framework of a metrical theory, because any of these operations will have to utilize the notion of test reading in its acoustic - and, therefore, temporal - variability. However, it does not follow from the fundamental omnipresence of time that the *descriptive* levels of prose rhythm, metre, and performance are all bound to explicitly include the temporal element. Derek Attridge (1982), for example, dispenses with time throughout his metrical analyses; but his handling of the material makes clear that he implies the dimension of time in his patterns of beat and off-beat.[58] The metrical theory proposed by Ewald Standop (1989), on the other hand, integrates the temporal aspect into the description of prose rhythm, metre, and performance in that it segments the verse line into perceptually isochronous measures based on the intralinear stress distribution. Such a uniform description of all metrical levels has the advantage of rendering them comparable and yielding clear results as to their interplay. Unless we are unadvisedly led to believe in a musical strictness of the temporal verse structure, we may readily accept Standop's theory as a successful amalgamation of time and stress in the metrical description of poetic rhythm.

As long as the temporal analysis of a line does not attempt to map out all the rhythmic refinements of an assumed performance, time measurement can be a useful component in the presentation of a metrical pattern. A musical notation, for instance, that tries to cover the rendition of a poem by a rhythmic precision ranging from minims to semi-quavers, is metrically not only inexpedient but useless. Yet, how do we arrive at a metrically sound rhythmization of the linguistic material? And what are the factors that enable us to segment a poetic line into periods of time? The temporal aspect of the syllable, as the elementary unit of rhythm in poetry, does not appear to be immediately relevant to the establishment of a time pattern, since syllabic quantity contributes only indirectly towards a recognition of time in verse. Those instances of poetry which purport to be constructed in compliance with an alternation of long and short syllables are still rhythmically recognized in terms of syllabic prominence, where duration is only one factor among others. And to find instances of syllabo-tonic verse in which the ictus consist of long syllables throughout a poem, would be quite difficult if not impossible.[59] Thus, syllabic quantity cannot be said to define in the first place the temporal structure of a line; but, rather more subtly, "it does in a hundred ways affect the charm, the movement, the melodiousness of English verse" (Omond 1903: 46). What counts in the time patterning of a verse line, is the relative syllabic prominence within words and phrases, by which we may obtain more than just one accentual structure. On the basis of possible stress patterns, we can then produce in test readings a set of temporally rigid but nonetheless linguistically viable realizations. Though any of these possibilities must be regarded as a potential metre, we will have to reject those patterns whose temporal structures fail to produce a metrical scheme that conforms to an aesthetically acceptable rendering.[60] It is in this

[58] In order to be able to assume the notion of silent beats or to demonstrate the pervasiveness of four-beat rhythms, Attridge must needs have relied on some inherent undercurrent of time. Yet, if we account only implicitly for the temporal component in metrical theory, we should not fail to acknowledge separately the significance of time in our understanding of poetic rhythms. For some constructive criticism of Attridge's descriptive model, see Standop (1984).

[59] Omond's implicit claim that syllables like *when*, *sel*dom, *min*strel, *death, song*, or in*dig*nant are accounted long, is untenable and probably due to difficulties in perceiving syllabic quantity apart from the other stress-determining features. (See 1903: 39).

[60] In order to illustrate the metrical significance of time, Oehrle argues:

> Suppose that a given verse instance has no intrinsic temporal structure. Then variation in the temporal program of delivery instances of the line which respect the intrinsic

process of determining the elasticity of time in metre that we come closest to the acoustic concreteness of an actual performance by test-reading into the realizability of a verse text. We must take care, however, not to lose sight of our more general aim of finding out those patterns which can be recognized as basic to *all* possible performances.

If we were to analyse a set of recorded readings of a poem, it would be for the purpose of illuminating the metrical findings rather than for the purpose of establishing a metre. Taking as our point of departure a performative blend like that which, in its various possibilities of ictic perception, is the result of an investigation into the spectrographic diversity of eleven recitations of Shakespeare's Sonnet 18 (see Chatman 1965: 158-183), we might be able to verify in a given verse text our intuitive impression of the perceptual perspicacity of an underlying metrical structure. If considered on its own, the analysis of performance usually fails to meet the theoretical demand for general validity. Douglas Oliver, however, tries to overcome the obstacle of performative idiosyncrasy by assuming the existence of "a 'normal' reading" (1989: 22) which would function as - in our terms - an implied performance. On the basis of several neutral readings of the same lines of verse, a group of expert judges is asked to assess the relative appropriateness of each recitation, so that finally, "the best reading polled [....] is then chosen as a standard against which to match all other readings" (Oliver 1989: 23). A comparative study of the various machine traces is useful when it comes to seeking out "the 'inherent music' of the line" (ibid.: 33-34) in terms of intonation contours and voicing patterns. While, perhaps, the most fruitful applications of this method might be found in determining the melodic suitability of poetic translations (see Oliver 1989: 55 and 65), the analysis and evaluation of machine traces gives only limited insights into the workings of poetic rhythm. A comprehensive comparison of performances may, it is true, reveal to some extent the rhythmic potential of a verse line, but such investigations - based as they are on the destination rather than the starting point of the process of poetic transformation - will never be able to explain *why* a certain variety of rhythms does occur. Metrical theory, on the other hand, draws upon the potentiality of a given verse text in order to delineate a rhythmic matrix among the co-ordinates of which each delivery design and delivery instance will find its proper place.

In order to avoid the pitfalls of performance-oriented approaches towards metre, it is inevitable that the metrist keep aloof from too detailed a description of the underlying stress pattern. A differentiation between two degrees of stress on level M is, therefore, appropriate. Any further refinement would gratuitously complicate the metrical template and its contrapuntal relation to the prose rhythm of a line. For the function of metre is not to *describe* the rhythmic patterns in a poem but to *"explain"* them. In addition, we may, however, assign to metre a range of restrictive rules or features, depending on the metrical pliability of a given verse type. If we consider the various kinds of metre to be clearly distinguishable, and if we deem the various kinds of verse to be clearly associated with a particular metre, we might want to predict the relation between a metrical structure and its possible manifestations. Moreover, we would also like to be able to account for the relative frequency or infrequency of

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> design properties of the verse in question should leave invariant the aesthetic qualities of the line. On the other hand, if variation in the temporal program of the line's delivery affects, in subjectively accessible ways, the line's concomitant aesthetic value, we may infer that the verse design has a temporal structure. (in Kiparsky/ Youmans 1989: 92)

certain phenomena in the textual fulfilment of a metrical pattern. Generative metrics and metrical statistics try to tackle these problems.

Gilbert Youmans illustrates most unambiguously the principal aims of a *generative* metrical theory by explaining the term in question:

> Actually, "generate" is a formal term drawn from mathematics and set theory. Sets may be defined in one of two ways: by listing their members or by giving explicit conditions for membership. Definitions of the latter sort are GENERATIVE. Infinite sets, such as the set of grammatical sentences in English, cannot be defined by lists. Hence, they must be defined generatively or not at all. Similarly, the set of permissible iambic pentameter lines in English is astronomically large (albeit finite, since iambic lines have a limited number of syllables). Such a set, too, must be defined generatively. (in Kiparsky/ Youmans 1989: 9)

Although the idea of establishing explicit conditions for a verse line to be assigned to a particular metrical set seems to promise global insights into the relationship between metre and verse, generative metrics suffers from a general unidirectionality of metrical projection. To focus on the process *from* the metre *to* the line of verse is to ignore the unceasing reciprocal interaction between the two. Since in each reading the rhythms of a verse line render to some extent uncertain the appropriateness of an underlying metrical pattern, whose threadbare existence cannot conceal the rather precarious position of its abstractness; it is not sufficient to merely establish a metre once and for all and consider its structure to be definite with regard to the potential of a metrically defined set of verse lines.[61] The application of generative rules will inevitably exclude some stress patterns as unmetrical in the context of a particular metre, even though their rhythms might intuitively be judged as acceptable. On the other hand, it is possible to construct metrical lines whose monstrosity is obvious even to an ignoramus of metre.[62] The sheer intellectual expenditure necessary to put into shape a metrical theory in which the shortcomings can hardly be kept under control despite theoretical adjustments - this expenditure makes it seem advisable to accept *per definitionem* the metricality of a verse line as a given, and to concentrate on the relative metrical complexity of a stress pattern by measuring it against an abstract prototype of metre.[63] Yet, even if generative metrical theories adhered to the principle of metrical relativity, they would - like all other theories of metre - have to admit that the rhythms of poetry defy comprehensive investigation; that any attempts at metrical explanation can only be approximate; and that, consequently, no one approach may claim to provide a pat solution to questions of metre and metricality.

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[61] Attridge tackles the same issue from the poet's point of view:

> To write metrical verse is not just to select arbitrarily an abstract pattern and give this a material embodiment in a sequence of sounds, as if it might be equally well represented by beads on a string, or by an arrangement of words with odd and even numbers of letters; it is the ordering of those sounds themselves in ways which are determined by the nature of the language and by the general aesthetic and psychological properties of rhythm. (1982: 54)

[62] See, for instance , the example of iambic pentameter given by Halle/ Keyser (1971: 178):

> *Billows, billows, serene mirror of the marine boroughs, remote willows*.

[63] For a more detailed discussion of metrical absoluteness versus metrical continuity, see Youmans (in Kiparsky/ Youmans 1989: 341-350).

The generative method employed by Halle and Keyser (1971), for example, is alluring in its straightforward assertions and conclusions, and it makes a valuable contribution towards understanding some of the rules by which an underlying metrical scheme restricts the linguistic realization of a verse line. While the approach is certainly valid in its general purport, its drawbacks become obvious when we consider the details. Apart from the above-mentioned distinction between metrical and unmetrical lines, neglect of the numerical component in the relationship between metrical positions and rhythmic syllables as well as disregard for the potential of the relative stress principle seem to us the most glaringly unsatisfactory aspects of the Halle-Keyser theory. An abstract metrical pattern whose positions may almost at random be occupied by more than one syllable renders too variable the number of syllables per line. A line of 18 syllables is hardly acceptable as iambic pentameter.[64] As for possible adjustments of phrasal stress, we note that the linear prose rhythm should not be taken for granted since full exploitation of the relative stress principle in favour of the metrical flow may easily render a metrically complex line comparatively smooth. When Halle and Keyser (1971: 174) assign a complexity of 5 to Shakespeare's

The course of true love never did run smooth (*Mids.* 1.1.134),

they do not take into consideration that the possible semantic emphasis on "true" and "did" may - in compliance with the relative stress principle and the underlying metre - virtually outstress the emphasis on "love" and "run". On the other hand, Donne's line

Yet dearly I love you and would be loved fain (ibid.: 171)

scores only two points on the complexity scale despite the impinging disruption of the duple metre by two triple patterns. Although the hiatal fusion of two rhythmic syllables into one metrical position has largely become an optional convention, there is no reason to believe in the general rhythmic smoothness of this device. For metrical complexity must be explained by intuitive introspection as well as by intellectual acceptance of certain metro-linguistic requirements. To establish a metre is to analyse and co-ordinate in test reading the metrical components on all levels simultaneously, and not one after the other.

In spite of its shortcomings, we would not go as far as Ewald Standop in pronouncing the Halle-Keyser theory "a fatal step backwards" (1975: 60). Generative metrics, it is true, fails to explain the subtle rhythmic effects of the accentual movements within the more or less complex verse line; but, then, this is not its primary concern. The comprehensive claim of being able to encompass by a set of rules all instances possible in iambic pentameter does not leave much room for a detailed analysis of rhythmic subtleties. In that it examines metrical verse forms from a different perspective, the generative approach does not replace the more conventional theories of metre but complements them. However, for generative metrical analysis to become more widely accepted presupposes the abandonment of its dichotomy between metrical and unmetrical lines in favour of a metrical continuum. In order to account for such a scale of metricality, we would have to replace in the Halle-Keyser theory the abstract metrical pattern by an equally abstract metrical prototype, and substitute preference rules for the inflexible correspondence

[64] See the example given in footnote 61, above.

rules. The extent to which the prose rhythm of a line can be made to comply with the metre of the prototypal norm will determine the line's degree of complexity. Thus, in theory, any verse line may be metrically described in terms of deviations from one particular norm; however, in practice, over-complex lines are likely to be defined as derivations of another metrical prototype. It is on such a basis that generative metrics may thrive and become irrefutably insightful.

While a generative theory of metre concentrates on the metricality of a verse line, the linguistic-statistical approach tries to specify the quality of that metricality in that it analyses quantitatively the occurrence of certain linguistic properties within a given string of metrical positions. As Marina Tarlinskaja writes, "in many cases, it is not the presence or absence of a phenomenon but its frequency in verse texts that is metrically relevant" (in Kiparsky/ Youmans 1989: 122). For the extent to which, at various stages in poetic history, a particular deviation from the norm is tolerated in the linguistic approximation of an ideal metrical prototype signifies the relative impact of that deviation on the historical development of a verse form. Thus, a diachronic investigation into the frequency of certain metro-linguistic features may enable us to distinguish between the metrical styles of different poets and epochs. A line that would rate as metrically complex from the absolute angle of a generative metrist, might turn out to be relatively straightforward in the poetic context of a particular historical or idiosyncratic style of metre. Moreover, the linguistic-statistical methodology provides a tool for us to compare synchronically the relative importance of ictic positions in an underlying metrical pattern: it is, for example, quite common in iambic pentameter to disregard the first ictus by trochaic inversion, whereas full linguistic stress is almost exclusively required in the realization of the final ictus. Provided that the preliminaries are based on a perceptive handling of the linguistic properties in a verse text, we must acknowledge the general usefulness of metrical statistics as a complementary method which furnishes good and valuable insights in addition to those afforded by the other theories of metre.

The above discussion of the linguistic-statistical approach to verse encompassing the historical dimension of metre brings to an end our critical examination of the elementary principles in metrical theory. We have adopted the following line of argument.

- The metre of a poem is its abstract rhythm.
- Metre explains rhythm in its cognitive entity, and rhythm depends on metre for intellectual recognition.
- All verse is metrical verse, since all verse has rhythm.
- A poetic metre recognizes the syllable as its constitutive element.
- In English verse, the metrical pattern consists of relatively stressed and unstressed syllables.
- Stress patterns are simultaneously both structural and temporal.
- Metrical theory must - explicitly or implicitly - account for the structural and for the temporal component in metre.
- It is requisite that the metrist be continually conscious of the theoretical level on which he or she is operating.
- No theory of metre can provide a full explanatory description of poetic rhythm.
- In a given verse form, metrical theory may want to justify the occurrence of particular verse instances.

- Metrical theory may also want to investigate the diachronic aspects of metre.
- Studies in metrical complexity must acknowledge the relativity of metricality.

This axiomatic outline of the fundamental assumptions basic to metrical analysis in general is conceived as a rough guide to further explorations in metre. All the above conclusions have emerged from theoretically developing a common-sense understanding of the metro-rhythmic potential in verse. But even though subjective intuition is responsible for most of our metrical insights, we hope to have compensated for a possible bias through close scrutiny of other theories of metre. Perhaps, the most crucial aspect of our metrical approach is the concept of test reading: it helps us to retain a certain sense of the textual reality without having to abandon an indispensable theoretical distance, and without falling prey to the performative fallacy. The following advice, which Cicely Berry gives to actors, holds equally true for metrists: "We so often understand something intellectually, and make the words fit in to what we understand, rather than understanding through saying the words" (1993: 242). The rhythms of poetry must be felt in tentative performance before we can derive from them any metrical substratum. For a theory of metre requires textual practice as much as abstract logic.

2. Locating the object of investigation

Following the theoretical discussion of rhythm and metre in the previous chapter, it now becomes necessary to picture the object of our metro-rhythmic investigations, free verse, in its various forms and disguises. To this purpose, we will adopt both a diachronic and a synchronic point of view, because the history of English and German free verse and the comparative study of contemporary free verse forms complement each other in their illuminative functions. The historical sketch in the first subchapter will, after some preliminary specifications and definitions, guide the reader from the imagistic breakthrough of free verse in England back to its possible madrigalian forerunners of the sixteenth century, where the perspective shifts to German poetry and describes chronologically the development of free-versish forms from about 1600 to 1900. In the second subchapter, then, we will try to compare different rhythmic structures in contemporary free verse on the basis of a specially devised system for the classification of free verse forms. Such an attempt is intended to fill with substance those aspects of a metro-rhythmic conception which a mere definition of free verse leaves void.

2.1. Historical perspectives: the emergence of free verse

If metre means rhythmic understanding, free verse is metrical verse because it can be rhythmically understood. The commonly invoked distinction between "metrical" and "unmetrical" verse fails to do justice to the large, overlapping variety of accentual patterns that occur on both sides of the divide: while, in some "metrical" verse, the underlying metre may occasionally fade to the point of being unrecognizable, the ostensibly random stress structures of "unmetrical" verse suggest sometimes a fairly regular metre in their accentual undulations. There are even poems whose stress patterns are so delicately poised between "metrical" regularity and "unmetrical" irregularity that it becomes virtually impossible to classify them as either "metrical" or "unmetrical" verse. Any decision in favour of one label or the other would have to be arbitrary. However, if we assume a metrical continuum (parallel to a corresponding rhythmic continuum) between the rigid stress alternations in, say, a Popian pentameter and the loose accentual distribution in newspaper prose, we avoid the rather simplistic distinction between "metrical" and "unmetrical" language - a distinction which has prevented many metrists from investigating *vers libre*. We advocate, then, a metrical analysis that accounts for the subtleties of stress pattern variation in order to illuminate the rhythmic possibilities in a free verse poem. The advantages of such an approach are patent: not only does it provide metrical insights into the irregular stress structures of free verse;[65] it also delivers free verse from the disgraceful position of being metrically regarded as a historical appendix to the great poetic tradition - with occasional overtones of artistic inferiority (see, for example, Steele 1990). If we were to concede - but we will not - that free verse poetry is generally inferior to non-free verse poetry, this concession would have to be based on a thorough examination of all poetic effects, not just on the mere presence or absence of a restrictive notion of metricality. For the subtleties of a possible metrical structure

[65] A detailed account of free verse metrics will be given in Chapter 4, below.

in free verse tax the ear even more than does the comparatively straightforward metro-rhythmic counterpoint in traditional verse.

Free verse is, thus, metrically unfree. However, in that it draws primarily on syntactic structures for the establishment of a metrical unit, free verse liberates the line from its traditional function as the sole and indisputable delimitation of metre. The effect of lineation is no longer, in the first place, tied up with the effect of metre: while, in traditional verse forms, any non-metrical linear effect must be considered subordinate to the *metrical* significance of the line, the free verse line is free to select any linguistic feature(s) for effectual predominance. Yet, linear freedom entails metrical constraint. As when a young boy who has run away from home to escape the oppressiveness of a dreary household is suddenly confronted with an almost infinite number of restrictive elements in the wilderness of nature, so does metre face the unrestrained immediacy of the various features of poetic language once it has left the sheltering confines of linear organization. There is no doubt that the boy will instinctively survive, if he may indulge in the life-preserving abundance of his natural environment - otherwise, he will perish. Similarly, poetic metre is sustainable only as long as it is allowed to feed on the rhythmically relevant elements of its linguistic material. Prosodic history will have to reveal whether the stress patterns of English and German mainstream poetry might, some day, return to the linear metricality of former times. The boy may change his mind and go back home.

Meanwhile, we have to accept the fact that contemporary free verse, rather than reverting to metrical orthodoxy, tends towards further linguistic disintegration. Since the standards by which we judge a conventional free verse poem are not necessarily applicable to the experimental work of the poetic avant-garde, we must no longer make unreflected use of an apparently straightforward descriptive terminology. What is verse? And what is poetry? These questions need to be answered prior to a historical characterization of free verse and a subsequent classification of its various forms. In the following definitions, we do not intend to cover any details of artistic practice; but we will aim at a precise distinction between verse and non-verse, poetry and non-poetry, so as to facilitate a clear localization of free verse in its manifold disguises. This chapter, then, sets out to shed light on the historical background as well as the textual diversity of free verse in order to reveal where free verse begins and where it ends.

Poetry is the manifestation of poetic intention, for the production of poetry implies its anticipatory conception as poetry. Poetry is, therefore, always willed, never mere coincidence. Such a definition does not preclude the poetic relevance of formal criteria; it merely provides the frame within which any realization of the authorial design must live up to its own poetic standards. Generally, these standards consist in a specially condensed moulding of the carefully selected raw material.[66] In language - as the original source of poetry - this poetic condensery[67] is most impressively effected by a regular linear metre and rhyme pattern. Yet, for lineation to signify poetic condensery presupposes a poetic context, in which either the title of the text, or its linguistic quality, or its inclusion in an anthology indicates poeticalness; for shopping lists, telephone directories, or tables of contents are usually not intended as poems in spite of their lineal organization. As more and more visual elements claim poetic relevance and, thereby, create new poetic forms, such as concrete poetry and conceptional poetry (see our discussion, below), the notion of linguistic condensery

[66] Cf. Ezra Pound's illustrative equation, "Dichten = condensare" (1961: 36).
[67] The term is Lorine Niedecker's (1970: 90).

gives way to an increasingly speculative kind of artistic design in which, ultimately, the poetic value rests solely on the poet's conception of his or her work as poetry.[68] While, in this way, the present domain of poetry continuously outgrows itself, the number of its characteristic formal criteria gradually approximates zero. This is the point when poetry depends for its existence entirely on the above definition.

Verse is poetic language[69] in lines, whereas prose is language without linear organization. Thus, all verse is poetry,[70] but not all prose non-poetry. Any text marked with the poetic label is subject to the closest scrutiny of its structural components: the rhythms of a free verse poem and the rhythms of a prose poem are, therefore, as much in need of metrical interpretation as the rhythms of a Shakespearean sonnet. Here, it should be remembered that metricality fails to rank among the defining criteria of English or German verse not because one particular form of verse, namely, free verse, is considered unmetrical (which it is not), but because metre is linguistically ubiquitous in the rhythmic undulations of accentual patterns. The interpretational relevance of metre depends, first of all, on the presence of the poetic, before rhythmic insignificance or preponderance of other structural components may diminish the importance of a metrical investigation into the rhythms of a poem. Within the limits of this proviso, all verse is susceptible to metrical analysis, whether on a lineal or syntactic basis. However, both syntax and lineation are, so to speak, endangered species in the fast-spinning world of post-modern poetry; and as the concepts of language and lineation undergo strange modifications and manipulations, sometimes even to the extent of utter destruction, verse tries to escape its own definition and gradually dwindles into non-existence. From a formal point of view, we can say that where the history of concrete and conceptional poetry begins, the history of verse comes to an end.

The above definitions, however, must not be regarded as historically ultimate and exhaustive. They are present-day specifications of a customary terminological use which often fails to differentiate between *poetry* and *verse*; and they purport to be nothing other than a mere expedient for investigating the variety of poetic forms throughout history. While the definition of verse may still resort to the formal aspect of lineation as its distinctive characteristic, the definition of poetry hinges upon the subjective criterion of a declared or implicit intention to write poetry as it is bound to put up with the absence of technical standards in the vagaries of post-modern poetics. Yet, their all-embracing function renders these definitions rather imprecise (though not at all inappropriate) when it comes to characterizing the English poetry of the past. If applied, for example, to the *Beowulf* manuscript, the defining criteria of poetry and verse require the support of stylistic features: the rhythmic use of alliterative stress patterns is a compositional constraint by which *Beowulf* and other manuscripts

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[68] Although, in principle, any product of human creativity may become a poem by being called a poem, there remains the proviso of sincerity. If used in a metaphorical or figurative sense, the term is not to be taken at face value. A symphonic poem, for example, is after all primarily conceived as a piece of music. And when a German praises the accomplishment of a cook by saying, "das Essen ist ein Gedicht," he or she does not in the least intend to enjoy the meal as if it were a poem. (Note that an English translation of the German phrase would have to dispense with the literal rendering of "Gedicht" as "poem".)

[69] Here, "language" means a linguistic form of expression in which the acoustic elements, notably syllables, retain their full rhythmic significance. This specification is necessary with respect to the various sorts of concrete poetry where the linear arrangement of linguistic elements marginalizes or obliterates the syllabo-rhythmic effects of language.

[70] In verse plays, the poetic is, however, subordinate to the dramatic.

are marked as different from non-alliterative texts written in Old English. Thus, the poetic intention is revealed by the obvious poeticalness of alliterative condensery, while in the auditory lines of rhythmic alliteration we hear the *verse* of Old English poetry. Albeit we may recover the poetic quality of Old English alliterative texts, we can only speculate about the way in which the Anglo-Saxons themselves appreciated their poetry.

Despite their limited reconstructability, period perspectives of poetry represent a valuable complement to purely technical analyses, if we wish to illuminate the relationship between a poetic form and its poetic environment at a given point in poetic history. The literary function of poetry and its significance for a historical reading are important characteristics that reach beyond a mere classification by metre and style. Thus, with regard to free verse, the following questions need to be answered. What are the semantic implications of the free verse label? Does the term "free verse" occur with different, or at least varying meanings? What are the reasons for the emergence of free verse, and what are its immediate predecessors? Finally, how does free verse develop since its establishment as a common poetic form? The theoretical situation presents itself in a clear-cut outline: an ideally defined concept of free verse form comprises all free verse instances regardless of their historical context; yet, whereas the majority of these instances is also covered by the factual existence of the free verse term, some instances of free verse must be regarded as anachronistic since their authors knew nothing about the free verse term and its ideological implications. In accordance with this sketch of a theoretical approach to free verse, we may, then, distinguish between instances of original free verse (whose forms are coeval with an actual free verse *Zeitgeist*) and instances of posthumous free verse (whose forms lack the support of a contemporaneous poetic ideology). On the basis of such a distinction, it will be possible to examine the whole history of English and German poetry from a free verse angle.

Setting aside, for a moment, the historical component, we define all free verse[71] as verse in which the line fails to constitute the basis of a stress metre. This preliminary definition allows for the fact that many twentieth-century poems are commonly referred to as free verse poems, although their construction is grounded on some idiosyncratic concept of metre.[72] Even with the numerical restrictions of a pure syllabic metre, which poets like Marianne Moore or Dylan Thomas have chosen for the metrical organization of some of their poems, the line retains a rhythmic freedom which resembles more the characteristics of metrically irregular verse than the characteristics of verse composed in syllabo-tonic metre.[73] A poem is a free verse poem only if careful test readings, driven by a desire to produce metro-rhythmic consistency, fall short of establishing a regular number of metrical stresses per line. This regularity includes, of course, the possibility of recurring supralinear patterns within which the number of metrical stresses in adjacent lines may differ.[74] However, when we now scour the literary past and present for specimen of free-versish poetry

[71] That is, all free verse in English or German.

[72] See, for instance, the "variable foot" of William Carlos Williams (1976: 38), or Charles Olson's "COMPOSITION BY FIELD" (1950: 16). Their metrical theory and practice will be discussed in Chapter 3.

[73] See Robert Bridges' (1933) explanation of the prosody of his late syllabic "free verse", dated December 1923.

[74] Take, for example, Cyril Scott's poem "Swans", in which the stress patterns are not lineally repeated but recur only in each stanza. With this elaborate design, Scott tries to uphold the virtues of metrical regularity, "instead of writing the all-too-facile *vers libre*" (1924: 57).

and subject them to repeated test readings, we will find that the apparent objective clarity of the free verse criterion is not infrequently blurred by the inherent subjective dimness of the analytical process. In stubborn cases of ultimate indecision, it would, indeed, be unwise to enforce the historically unreflected classification of a certain poem. For the history of free verse is by no means straightforward in its simultaneity of form and *Zeitgeist*.[75]

Especially, the posthumous application of the free verse label needs to be controlled by a steady awareness not only of the prevalent poetic practice in a particular poetic epoch, but also of the poet's alleged or evident metrical intention. There is no use enforcing the above definition of free verse in its theoretical rigidity on a poem that conveys stylistically and tonally the impression of having been modelled after some ancient metrical form, though at the same time it defies all attempts at reconciling metrical form and actual stress patterns. Whether such verse is, eventually, considered to be free verse, or rather a verse form occupying some intermediate stage between metrically regular and metrically irregular verse, depends on the poetic conditions set by prosodic history. For example, while, in the twentieth century, T.S. Eliot regarded the approximation of a traditional metre as a valuable means of writing good free verse,[76] Klopstock's free rhythms emphasized, in the eighteenth century, their close connection with classical verse forms.[77] Although it may be tempting to define a poem on purely metrical grounds as posthumous free verse, one should always take into account the possibility of a different metrical conception or interpretation by the author or a contemporary critic. Had Klopstock written his free-rhythmic odes in English and in the twentieth century, they would certainly have been regarded as free verse. After all, the use of this notorious term may, in doubtful cases, always be qualified in an epithetical phrase or a brief explanatory comment. For the general omnipresence of the free verse label in poetic criticism does not only challenge the acuteness of a theoretical mind, but at the same time necessitates certain concessions to critical practice.

The emergence of English free verse owes much to the development of *vers libre* in France, where this new poetic concept was first put into practice by Gustave Kahn in 1886.[78] British and American writers of verse followed the French example some 25 years later. The reasons for such a time-lag are too manifold to be exhaustively enumerated; and even if we make do with only the most plausible explanations, there will always remain that indefinite amount of suppositional uncertainty which is immanent in any kind of historical aetiology. Mindful of these methodological limitations, we will nonetheless try to elucidate those factors which appear to be most contributive to a full understanding of the historical differences between English free

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[75] "It's misleading to identify technique with received forms or dehistoricized devices, or to suggest that it is a function of individual skill. There is no technique independent of the life context in which, and through which, it is realized" (James Scully in Frank/ Sayre 1988: 106). However, owing to the complexity of the historical process and its structures, we will not be able to account for a poetic form solely on the basis of history.

[76] In his "Reflections on Vers Libre", Eliot advocates the metrical technique of his own free verse compositions when he writes:

> [T]he most interesting verse [....] has been done either by taking a very simple form, like the iambic pentameter, and constantly withdrawing from it, or taking no form at all, and constantly approximating to a very simple one. (1965: 185)

[77] Klopstock explained his notion of *Freie Rhythmen* as "Oden, welche in jeder Strophe das Silbenmaß verändern" (quoted in Wagenknecht 1981: 97).

[78] For any historical information relating to French free verse, I am indebted to Clive Scott's (1990) invaluable book about the emergence of free verse in France.

verse and French *vers libre*. At bottom, the development of rhythmic patterns in poetry hinges upon the metrical malleability of the linguistic material: a language with comparatively few and weak intrinsic markers of rhythmic movement is metrically easier to manipulate than a language whose rhythms are unremittingly hammered out in quick succession. In the first case, however, a metre is as effortlessly abandoned as it is adopted; whereas, in the second, a suitable metrical scheme tends to provide a fairly stable and, therefore, durable foundation of rhythmical organization. It is obvious that the slightly elusive melodiousness of the phrasal accent in French produces a rhythmic impression which is less pointed than the insisting beat of the frequently recurring stress in English.

Prosodic history reveals that the pre-eminence of linear rigidity in French verse was undermined already in the seventeenth century by the occurrence of *vers irréguliers* (also called *vers mêlés* or *vers libres classiques*), in which "lines of different length, though conforming to classical precepts in their internal construction, are irregularly and unpredictably combined" (Scott 1990: 88). This verse form was based on the belief that interlinear variation improves, in certain cases, the quality of poetic diction by rendering it more prosaic and, thus, more natural.[79] Just contrary to the *inter*linear variability and *intra*linear regularity of *vers libres classiques*, the cankerous rhythms of *vers libéré* in the late nineteenth century destabilized the metrical structure within the line while simultaneously preserving the appearance of rhythmic consistency through lineal isosyllabism and rhyme. If we combine the modifiable components of *vers libres classiques* and *vers libéré*, we arrive invariably at *vers libre* proper, in which neither the syllabic relations between lines nor the rhythmic patterns within the line permit of any metrical predictability. To depict the origination of French free verse in such a simplified theoretical manner fails, of course, to do justice to the variety of different free verse forms and the often unaccountable peculiarities of their historical emergence. Nevertheless, the above presentation of *vers libre* as the point of convergence between the different metrical irregularities in *vers mêlés* and *vers libéré* demonstrates that French free verse does not invent a new technique but merely relies on an unexampled *combination* of more or less well-established modes of rhythmic disruption. Free verse is, then, in Clive Scott's words, "a prosodic development from its antecedents not a sudden rupture" (1990: 1).

Among the antecedents of French free verse is also a poetic variety which, in its formal freedom, would rather be supposed to come historically after *vers libre* since it dispenses with lineation altogether. We are talking about the prose poem. Its original source being possibly "the habit of presenting foreign verse *poems* in *prose* translations" (Scott 1990: 110-111), the prose poem can be regarded, from a more theoretical point of view, as "a kind of proto-*vers libre*" (110) in which we may detect numerous free verse poems of different linear shapes.[80] Yet, as the prose poem continually suggests the existence *in statu nascendi* of free verse linearity, the actual manifestation of the line is endlessly suspended because of its intrinsic opposition: there is no possibility for any line to take on definite form without encroaching upon

[79] Cf. La Fontaine's words in the preface to his first book of fables: "L'auteur a voulu éprouver lequel caractère est le plus propre pour rimer des contes. Il a cru que les vers irréguliers ayant une air qui tient beaucoup de la prose, cette manière pourrait sembler la plus naturelle et, par conséquent, la meilleure" (quoted in Scott 1990: 88).

[80] Timothy Steele (1990) employs the term "proto-free verse" in a diachronic sense to refer to that kind of poetry for which we have reserved the term "posthumous free verse"; and, in addition, to include poetic prose that appears to have been influential in the establishment of *vers libre*.

the right of all other lines to shape up in the same way. In the visual non-linearity of the *Beowulf* manuscript, for example, this right is granted by the regularity of alliterative stress patterns, so that the verse shape of the poem can be chiselled out of its prosaic-looking raw material. The texture of prose poetry, on the other hand, is too fluid to be submitted to the tools of a sculptor. It is precisely this non-linear fluidity which makes the prose poem charmingly provocative.

The terminological set of "prose poem", "*vers libéré*", and "*vers libres classiques*" (or "classical free verse", to give the phenomenon an English name) complements our previous pair of original and posthumous free verse. Yet, despite their clear definition, we must be prepared for some crossover between original free verse and the English equivalent of *vers libéré*, as well as between posthumous and classical free verse. The distinction is, in some cases, purely historical in the sense that a certain verse form would equally belong to either category, were it not for the qualifying element of history. It is then, in metrically ambiguous poetry that we find the historical component most availing. However, as soon as history is supposed to be answerable for any literary developments, we ought to take care not to overstate the case of historical causality. For the mere fact that French free verse tipped the scales of versification in favour of poetic lawlessness one quarter of a century before English prosody could boast of a similar success does not necessarily imply the logical conclusion that English free verse derived from French free verse. However important the influence of the latter on the former, we must always allow for two aspects of qualification: first, the cultural relationships between two countries are always to some extent reciprocal; and, secondly, in our desperate search for the historical sources of a poetic form, we should not be blind to the possibility of individual originality.[81] With these caveats in mind, we will now proceed with our assessment of the free verse movement in England and America.

English *vers libre* emerged not as an incidental whim or fashion but as the concomitant of *Imagism*, a poetical creed which aimed at linguistic precision in the art of versification. This movement - among whose representatives were both British and American poets, notably Richard Aldington, F.S. Flint, D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound, H.D., John Gould Fletcher, and Amy Lowell - began to be more widely recognized after the publication of three separate imagist anthologies in 1915, 1916, and 1917. "These three little books," Amy Lowell writes, "are the germ, the nucleus, of the school" (1917: 255). In the preface to the issue of 1915, we find among the principles of Imagism also the following:

> To create new rhythms - as the expression of new moods - and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free-verse" as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often

[81] Cyrena N. Pondrom (1974: 2), who thoroughly investigates the French influence on English poetry between 1900 and 1920, writes:

> Of course, the origins of modern poetry in England are far too complex to be seen only in terms of a foreign influence. The attention of Richard Aldington and Hilda Doolittle (H.D.) to classical Greek lyric cannot be attributed originally to French inspiration; Pound had begun to study the troubadours before he became an exile in Europe; even the scientific formulation of wave patterns as a description of the motion of sound and matter made a contribution to new ideas of form; and "influences", finally, can never *explain* individual accomplishment.

> be better expressed in free-verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea. (Aldington *et.al.* 1915: vi-vii)

Here, the non-insistence on free verse clearly jars with its unconcealed recommendation, in spite of semantic qualifiers ("may often"). Amy Lowell explains that, as regards the use of *vers libre*, "the group are somewhat divided in their practice" (1917: 243). However, on glancing through the poetry in the afore-mentioned imagist collections, one comes across only a few specimens (by D.H. Lawrence) which reveal occasional echoes of a regular metre and rhyme; the vast majority of poems is composed in straightforward *vers libre*. On the whole, we can say that with the rise of Imagism English free verse came gradually to supersede the poetic tradition.

Yet, metrically regular verse remained for a considerable time on a par with *vers libre*. Not only did William Butler Yeats uphold in his poems the virtues of a subtly refined metre, but also the younger generation of poets like W.H. Auden, Dylan Thomas, Stephen Spender, or Louis MacNeice preferred to combine for the most part metrical regularity with rhythmical ingenuity rather than further exploring the possibilities of free verse. Moreover, when we flick through the early volumes of Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine, we notice from 1912 to 1921 but a small increase in the relative number of free verse poems. The majority of poetic contributions are written in metrically regular lines. Although F.S. Flint and Ezra Pound indirectly supported *vers libre* when they broke a lance for Imagism in their vol. 1 articles, while Alice Corbin Henderson and Amy Lowell took pains to justify free verse (in vol. 2 and 3, respectively) as proper verse different from prose, their overall influence on the metrical organization of poems in later issues was only moderate. And though we must acknowledge that already in the first two or three years of the *Poetry* magazine new names appeared among the contributors of free verse compositions (for instance, Witter Bynner, Mary Eastwood Knevels, Skipwith Cannell, Orrick Johns, Carl Sandburg, Ford Madox Hueffer, Richard Butler Glaenzer, Maxwell Bodenheim, and John Alford), there is no doubt that the general acceptance of *vers libre* as a poetic form was but gradually gaining ground.[82] Yet, albeit slowly, free verse progressed steadily.

One of the reasons why *vers libre* seemed to be more reluctantly accepted in England than in France may be traced - as Timothy Steele (1990: 16-18) points out - to the apparent oxymoronic quality of the term, which is among English speakers more glaringly evident than among French speakers. While, in England, the common definition of verse as metrically confined language strikes the poetic mind as incompatible with the notion of freedom, in France, this sense of contradiction is less intense on account of the derivative homophonic connection between modern *vers libre* and *vers libres (classiques)*. In order to avoid the grating connotations of the English term, many of the early free verse poets in England employed the French expression when writing about their new poetic concept. Compare, for instance, Eliot's "Reflections on Vers Libre" of 1917 (in Eliot 1965: 183-189) with his 1942 lecture, "The Music of Poetry" (in Eliot 1957: 26-38): what Eliot calls "*vers libre*"

[82] Keath Fraser (1977: 222) points out that "as late as 1925, Aldington, in particular, was still explaining publicly that free verse was not alien to poetry." In 1917, by contrast, T.S. Eliot already indicated in his "Reflections on Vers Libre" that "[the verse columns of the popular American magazines] are now largely given over to *vers libre*" (1965: 184). Our own investigations have shown that Eliot's remark is to be taken with a grain of salt.

throughout the first essay is being referred to as "free verse" in the second. On the other hand, the paragraph quoted above from the 1915 preface to *Some Imagist Poets* makes already exclusive use of the English term. "Free verse" appears, however, between quotation marks and in hyphenated form when it first occurs, and Steele remarks: "The phrase, that is, is translated, but the quotation marks and hyphen would seem to indicate its still foreign character" (1990: 17). This observation is too general not to ask for further investigations. While it is obvious that inverted commas can be applied in order to highlight the extraordinariness of a word or phrase, for example, with respect to its foreign character, the semantic implications of hyphenating the combination of adjective and noun in "free-verse" are less straightforward.

From a grammatical point of view, the hyphen merges a noun phrase into a compound noun. This alteration would not make much of a difference, were it not for the concomitant stress shift from the nominal head of the noun phrase to the adjectival constituent of the compound noun. In the ensuing slight emphatic change of meaning, the premodifying component is promoted to a defining distinctive feature by which the new compound may acquire a semantic status altogether different from that of the noun phrase. If we traced the etymological formation of a compound in its various spellings, we would find that, in most cases, the constituents appear first separate, then hyphenated, and finally written out as one word. In this process of verbal amalgamation, the component parts gradually forfeit their original characteristics in favour of a growing independence of the whole. Compounding, however, may also consist in the meaningful ad hoc formation of a new term in order to occupy a hitherto unoccupied semantic niche. Thus, we distinguish etymologically between two different kinds of compounding: on the one hand, there are compounds which have developed out of a historically long-standing, customary use of certain word combinations; but, on the other hand, there are also those compounds which have been created - possibly just for the nonce - by some instant semantic need. In both cases, the new word asserts its meaningful otherness against the semantic forces of its constituents. Yet, the etymologically grown compound develops its new significance gradually and naturally, so that to be different does not mean to appear different; whereas the ad hoc formation gives the impression of being different for the sake of appearing different.

The hyphenation of the term "free-verse" in the preface to the 1915 anthology of imagist poetry represents an instance of spontaneous and inorganic compounding. It avoids the awkward self-contradiction implied in a combination of the independently meaningful words "free" and "verse" by forging a new meaning through their grammatical amalgamation. "Free-verse" is not simply "verse that is free"; its hyphenated form signifies the birth of a verbal entity whose semantic characteristics amount to something other than the mere sum of the semantic characteristics of its constituent parts. This otherness of the compound justifies the possibility of "free-verse" as a poetic form that fails to comply with the metrical requirements of common "verse". Thus, while the proposition "free verse is not verse" is overtly paradoxical, it may be perfectly right to say, "free-verse is not verse". When the imagists introduced the English equivalent of "*vers libre*" in a hyphenated rather than phrasal form, they suggested its foreign character by imitating the notional independence of the French term. However, not all imagistic poets used the compound spelling.

For, as early as 1914, the English term was employed without hyphen by Richard Aldington in his article "Free Verse in England" (in *The Egoist*, 15 September 1914: 351-352), following a declaration in the opening paragraph that the French term "*vers*

libre" had come to be practically meaningless and should, therefore, be replaced by its more explicit English equivalent, "free verse". Aldington's wholehearted commitment in the above article shows him to be one of the foremost contenders in the fight for a due recognition of the new poetic principle. His first free verse poems date back to 1911, and it has been said (in Fraser 1977: 222) that he was at that time still ignorant of the French symbolist movement. However, in 1912, he met Ezra Pound, and this new acquaintanceship clearly helped to widen Aldington's intellectual horizon, for example, with regard to French *vers libre*. Interestingly, 1912 was also the year of Pound's *Ripostes*, as well as other of his early free verse poems which appeared in Harriet Monroe's *Poetry* magazine: it seems that both Aldington and Pound benefitted equally from their mutual friendship. Their imagist gatherings with H.D., F.S. Flint, and others argued the cause of free verse beyond the bare evidence of poetic practice in that they provided a public forum for the dialectical discourse among like-minded poets. The publication of several articles in various magazines or papers between 1912 and the mid-1920s testified to the vitality of the imagist perspective on poetry.[83] Free verse was located all but in the centre of this maelstrom of poetic debate.

It is, perhaps, impossible to state with certainty who, among the imagists, may claim the role of initiator. However, one member of the group, the poet-philosopher T.E. Hulme, nurtured anti-traditional ideas already in his "Lecture in Modern Poetry" of 1908 or 1909.[84] In this essay, he frankly confesses to be "of course in favour of the complete destruction of all verse more than twenty years old" (Hulme 1962: 69), because poetry is - unlike acting and dancing - an immortal art, which "must find a new technique each generation" (ibid.). With *vers libre* as precedent, he advocates a poetic style in which "the production of a general effect [....] takes away the predominance of metre" (71). Devoid of metrical organization, then, the quality of a poem is closely linked with the freshness of its images. Unfortunately, Hulme's remarks about poetic style remain rather vague and indistinct in his 1908/09 lecture; only in a later essay does he adopt a more clearly imagistic point of view when he writes that "[poetry] always endeavours to arrest you, and to make you continuously see a physical thing, to prevent you gliding through an abstract process" (Hulme 1977: 134). The importance of these writings is such that there can be no doubt about Hulme's contribution to the emergence of Imagism being considerable; yet, to call him without reservations "the originator of Imagism" (Hynes' introduction to Hulme 1962: xix) seems a little too favourable.

A verbal attack by F.S. Flint on the poetic conservatism of the tradition-oriented Poet's Club preceded - and, perhaps, triggered - the open rebellion of the then club member T.E. Hulme against conventional poetry (see Sam Hynes' introduction to Hulme 1962: xvi). What followed, were weekly meetings in a Soho restaurant from 25 March 1909, where Flint, Hulme, and others - dissatisfied as they all were with the English versification of the time - discussed their own attempts at writing poetry in unconventional verse forms such as *vers libre* (see Flint 1915). The necessary background information about the contemporary French scene was provided mainly by F.S. Flint, whose knowledge in this respect is said to have been "far more extensive than that of Hulme or Pound" (Pondrom 1974: 10). It was basically after

[83] See, for instance, the dispute between T.S. Eliot ("Prose and Verse") and Richard Aldington ("A Note on Poetry in Prose") in *The Chapbook* No 22 April 1921 over the divide between poetic prose and prosaic poetry.

[84] The dates are given in Sam Hynes' introduction to Hulme (1962: xviii).

Flint's example that French poetry and poetic ideas of that time were closely studied by his fellow imagists. In this field, even Ezra Pound owed something to the transmissive accomplishments of F.S. Flint.[85] Thus, we should take care not to underestimate Flint's contribution to the emergence of free verse in England, even though his poetic achievements are of minor significance. As Cyrena Pondrom remarks:

> It would be a grave mistake in literary history to confuse Flint's standing as a poet or his lack of interest in critical evaluation with his crucial role as transmittor of information about French poetry to a London *avant garde* seeking just such a catalyst to expedite - or make possible - the development of a modern poetic tradition. It is in the latter role that Flint's primary importance lies. (1974: 11)

No further comment is necessary.

Ford Madox Ford is another poet to be mentioned in connection with Imagism. In his book *Thus to Revisit* of 1921, he sets himself up as "the doyen of living writers of *Vers Libre* in English" (1966: 198). Quoting a few lines from a poem of his, called "The Great View", Ford points out that it "must have been in rhymed *Vers Libre*" (or, in our terminology, classical free verse, if we judge the whole poem by the five lines supplied), and that it "must have been written before 1898" (1966: 206). From this he concludes that, by that date, he had apparently already "pretty well worked out [his] formula" (ibid.), namely - and, at this point, he enumerates the five items of his stylistic recipe - the poetic credo of Imagism. However, in the next paragraph he concedes that he "evolved [these rules] in the succeeding ten or fifteen years" (207). This slight inconsistency exhorts us not to take too readily for fact what Ford wrote in self-praise about his own poetic feats and achievements. And yet, one cannot deny that he was influential in the establishment of free verse in England. His early poems tend towards "rhymed *Vers Libre*" with lines of different length, but mostly without that intralinear irregularity of accentual patterns which is so typical of later imagist free verse. The two monologues of his poem "From the Soil" (in *The Face of the Night* (1904)), for example, demonstrate the approximate metrical range within which most of his pre-war verse is composed: while some passages in the first monologue stand metrically between classical free verse and free verse proper with the addition of rhyme, the second is written in plain blank verse. In general, Ford's poetry betrays its close relation to Imagism through a straightforward, sober, everyday style and diction.

Despite their rejection of hackneyed rhythms and well-worn metres, the imagists owned up to a particular predilection and affinity for the greatest works of the poetic tradition. With this historical background in mind, they claimed that "[*vers libre*] owes its inception to no personal idiosyncrasy, but has been slowly evolved from existing laws" (Lowell 1971: 22). Free verse is not regarded as a novel phenomenon but appears to have haunted the minds of some poets throughout the last three or four centuries. Thus, we read in the 1916 preface to *Some Imagist Poets*:

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[85] Pondrom (1974: 21-31) writes that the relationship between Pound and Flint suffered when the latter got the impression that the former had gained undue publicity through him. "The account of jealousy and conflict is particularly interesting [...] because it suggests again how highly poets of the day rated the catalytic effect of French influence in the development of modern English poetry" (31).

> The name *vers libre* is new, the thing, most emphatically, is not. Not new in English poetry, at any rate. You will find something very much like it in Dryden's *Threnodia Augustalis*; a great deal of Milton's *Samson Agonistes* is written in it, and Matthew Arnold's *Philomela* is a shining example of it. Practically all of Henley's *London Voluntaries* are written in it, and (so potent are names) until it was christened *vers libre*, no one thought of objecting to it. (Aldington *et al.* 1916: xi)

In this excerpt, the distinction between the thing and its name corresponds to our distinction between original and posthumous free verse. Since poetry is more likely to be condemned for what it professes to be than for what it actually is, a free form of verse will probably go unscathed (and, perhaps, unheeded) as long as it is not publicly conceptualized as "free verse". Yet, what the imagists, in the above quotation, suppose to be *vers libre*, is in fact nothing of the sort if we consider the term in its modern sense. The three poems by Dryden, Milton, and Arnold may to some extent carry the label of *vers libres classiques*, but they are certainly not free verse.[86] Henley's *London Voluntaries* are based on an iambic pentameter from which the individual line may deviate *either* in terms of syllabic length, *or* in terms of metrical regularity. The two devices are hardly ever used simultaneously, and the overall impression of a dominant regular metre throughout the poem is reinforced by varying rhyme patterns. Nevertheless, Henley's twofold destabilization of the pentameter scheme points into the direction of free verse.

In the unrhymed poem "Ave, Caesar!" ("In Hospital", XIX), Henley employs a metrical language which constantly suggests an underlying four-beat rhythm, although a purely rational analysis of its stress patterns will lead to the conclusion that this piece of poetry is free verse, or at least classical free verse. Considering the influence which Henley's work is said to have had on Richard Aldington (see Fraser 1977: 222), we will quote the whole of "Ave, Caesar!" and reveal its peculiar metrical ambiguity:

> From the winter's grey despair,
> From the summer's golden languor,
> Death, the lover of Life,
> Frees us for ever.
>
> Inevitable, silent, unseen,
> Everywhere always
> Shadow by night and as light in the day
> Signs she at last to her chosen;
> And, as she waves them forth,
> Sorrow and Joy
> Lay by their looks and their voices,
> Set down their hopes, and are made
> One in the dim Forever.
>
> Into the winter's grey delight,
> Into the summer's golden dream,
> Holy and high and impartial,

[86] Among the best examples of classical free verse in English are Coventry Patmore's poems in "The Unknown Eros".

Death, the mother of Life,
Mingles all men for ever.

In the following metrication, stressed and unstressed syllables are represented as X and x, respectively. The silent stresses and non-stresses implied in the metrical structure of a four-beat rhythm appear in parentheses at the end of a line:

xxXxXxX(xX) or: XxXxXxX
xxXxXxXx(X) or: XxXxXxXx
XxXxxX(xX)
XxxXx(XxX)

xXxxxXxxX(xX)
XxxXx(XxX)
XxxXxxXxxX
XxxXxxXx(X)
XxxXxX(xX)
XxxX(xXxX)
XxxXxxXx(X) or: xXxXxxXx(X)
XxxXxxX(xX) or: xXxXxxX(xX)
XxxXxXx(X)

xxxXxXxX(xX) or: XxxXxXxX
xxxXxXxX(xX) or: XxxXxXxX
XxxXxxXx(X)
XxXxxX(xX)
XxxXxXx(X).

An auditory realization of this four-beat rhythm in a metrical rendering of the poem would, by and large, be not unnatural, since the rhythmically required pause at the end of a line coincides, in most cases, with a sufficiently marked syntactic boundary. There are, however, two exceptions. While, in line 10, the two silent beats separate rather awkwardly the grammatical subject ("Sorrow and Joy") from its predicate in the following lines, the rhythmic break at the end of line 12 is justified by the forceful tensional effect of withholding momentarily a grammatical object from its transitive verb. Generally, the strict avoidance of metrical stress clashes within the line[87] conveys an overwhelming impression of rhythmic regularity which, in combination with mostly three-stress lines, strongly urges four-beat rhythmicity. And yet, irregular lineation and absence of rhyme, as well as a doggerel-like variation of intralinear stress distribution, clearly emphasize the free-versish character of "Ave Caesar!". Some other metrically rather irregular poems of the "In Hospital" sequence - for example, VII "Vigil" and XI "Clinical" - defy the possibility of a sustained four-beat rhythm and may justly be called free verse in spite of their tendency towards lines with a metrically intermittent triple accentuation.

Although Henley anticipated in some of his poems the liberation of verse from a superimposed metrical rigidity, he mainly versified in common metres as did basically all his contemporary English fellow poets. Thus, when we glance through the verse compositions of writers like Lionel Johnson, John Davidson, Victor Plarr, or

[87] It should be noted, here, that the possible linguistic stress clash in the last line ("all men") is easily smoothed away in accordance with the relative stress principle (cf. Chapter 1).

Richard Le Gallienne - to name only a few - we find that, in general, their metrical style is quite conventional and certainly less daring than, for example, Robert Browning's vigorous handling of the iambic pentameter in his narrative verse. Also Arthur Symons and Ernest Dowson, who might be counted among the more important non-canonical poets of the time, mould most of their poetic conceits into an orthodox shape. Occasionally, it is true, they try out new effects, or step, with just one foot, secretively onto metrically unhallowed ground; but, on the whole, even such poems remain within the boundaries of a linear metre. Some of Arthur Symons' "music-hall" pieces, for example, surprise the reader with rhyme patterns that run counter to metrical expectation; and Ernest Dowson may be confusing in his long end-rhymed lines of "Impenitentia Ultima", where a metre-oriented rhythmical reading could come up with seven-stress lines in the first three and six-stress lines in the last two stanzas, or of "The Sea-Change", where one's metrical instinct is invariably at a loss whether to suggest the slightly forced regularity of seven stresses per line or the merely approximate consistency of linear fourteeners as the prevailing mode of metrical organization. Such a vague intimation of a regular metre announces free verse. Or take, for example, the poem "Stormy Nights" by Robert Louis Stevenson. While the first half is characterized by regular stress alternation within lines of varying length, the second half shows an increasing disintegration of accentual regularity: free verse, or classical free verse? - Rhymelessness favours the former.

Obviously, the boundaries between regular linear metrics and irregular non-linear metrics are fluid. A poem in this metrical grey area may, or may not, be classified as free verse. It also remains problematical whether the form of *vers libres classiques* deserves posthumously to be dubbed free verse, since the relative metrical preponderance of either regular stress patterns or irregular lineation is often difficult to ascertain. In order to obtain a definite result, one would have to answer rather absurd questions about both qualitative and quantitative aspects of free verse style. What kinds of infringements, and how many, are necessary to turn a regular line into an irregular line or regular lineation into irregular lineation? Any precise answer to such a question would be ridiculously arbitrary. For this reason, it is apposite that we revise our above definition of English and German free verse in the light of fluid boundaries between metrical forms. Rather than being straightforwardly defined as verse in which the line fails to constitute the basis of a stress metre, free verse is characterized by its marked tendency to dispense with both regular stress patterns and regular lineation. This characterization - vague as it is - does not render the previous definition redundant but functions as complementary qualification. Thus, in the following, we will examine and discuss some claims for posthumous free verse not with the intention to verify or falsify them, but on the understanding that different levels of test reading may produce different levels of metricality.

Poeticalness and the absence of a regular linear stress metre constitute the criterial co-ordinates by which any writing that precedes the emergence of original *vers libre* may be characterized as posthumous free verse. The most obvious poetic work in this category is Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. This free verse collection owes its impact on many of the early poets of *vers libre* proper to a poetic independence and conceptual grandeur which does not admit of linguistic pettiness or metrical triviality. In order to present - rather than represent - the greatness of all earthly things, Whitman forwent the use of preconceived accentual metrics and, instead, composed long and detailed lists of words or phrases within paratactic sentence structures and syntax-dominated lines so as to create a poetic voice indicative of freedom, America,

and the universe. When, in 1855, the first edition of *Leaves of Grass* appeared, there existed no genuine precedent to its extraordinary concept. Indeed, the perfect amalgamation of form and content convey the impression that Whitman's work originated mainly in the grand scheme of an inventive and sincere individual mind. Yet, someone who wanted at all costs to seek out some direct external influence on Whitman and his long lines in *Leaves of Grass*, could find something distantly similar in Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*.[88]

Its immense popularity in the mid-nineteenth century - not only in the United Kingdom but even more so in the United States - would seem to render Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* a not improbable source of inspiration to other poets. However that may be, this fairly voluminous work appears not to have been intended as poetry at the time of its first publication in 1838 (first series). Derek Hudson (1949: 42) points out that

> Tupper when he wrote the first two series of "Proverbial Philosophy" made no claim to be writing poetry. When an early American catalogue listed his book under the heading "Poetry" he drew attention to the fact in the margin of a scrapbook with apparent surprise. His own word for the form was "rhythm" or "rhythmics". When the *Spectator*, in the first English criticism, said that Tupper's "maxims or proverbs" were "expressed in hexameter verse, or what is intended as such", he declared in the margin that "the idea had never crossed my mind, until I saw it in this first critique."

To dispel, right at the beginning, any doubts as to the poeticalness of *Proverbial Philosophy*, we should call attention to the fact that, from our point of view, the intentional composition of "rhythmics" in verse lines invariably means "poetry". Tupper's apparent reluctance to accept the latter term for his *Proverbial Philosophy* reveals his limited conception of poetry as metrically regular verse. Less unequivocal than the issue of poeticalness is the question on what grounds and to what extent the work deserves posthumously to be called free verse. The above-mentioned criticism in the *Spectator* gives already a reasonably accurate description of the verse form in *Proverbial Philosophy*. For Tupper's "rhythmics" approximate, indeed, with varying similitude the characteristics of hexameter verse. To be sure, a perfect dodecasyllabic line with alternating metrical stresses and non-stresses will hardly be found in the whole work, but a significant majority of lines features six syntactic main stresses which, in a natural prosaic test reading, attain metrical relevance. Furthermore, the greater number of these six-stress lines is syntactically divided between the third and fourth stress so that the rhythmic effect resembles that of an Alexandrine. And yet, exceptions to this rule are sufficiently frequent to suggest that Tupper's predominant use of the six-stress line is unconsciously accidental rather than rhythmically deliberate. We are dealing, here, with the curious situation of a literary work whose author did not know that he was writing poetry. Thus, while one cannot altogether invalidate the classification of Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy* as posthumous free verse, there is, perhaps more to be said against such an idea. At any rate, the possible

[88] Cf. Hudson (1949: 43), who has "little doubt that Walt Whitman [....] was influenced by Tupper's innovation."

influence of this work on Whitman, or even later writers of free verse, must remain highly speculative.[89]

Two other candidates for posthumous free verse - the long ("prophetic") poems by William Blake and Christopher Smart's *Jubilate Agno*[90] - are too obscure to claim any influence on the development of free verse. Yet, despite their historical insignificance, these works rouse our interest because of their unusual rhythmic patterns or idiosyncratic poetic form. Blake's long poems - such as "The French Revolution" (1791), "Visions of the Daughters of Albion" (1793), "America" (1793), "Vala, or the Four Zoas" (1795-1804), or "Milton" (1804-1808) - are all composed on the metrical basis of seven-stress lines. While in some of these poems - for instance, "America", or "Vala, or the Four Zoas" - the heptameter is fairly regular throughout, in others - like "The French Revolution", or "Milton" - the accentual undulations are less consistent and, though more flexible in their dependence on strong syntactic stresses, disallow occasionally the rhythmic establishment of a seven-stress line. These latter poems may well be termed posthumous free verse. A completely different concept underlies the poetic structure of Smart's fragmented work, *Jubilate Agno* (1757-63).[91] Following a distinctive feature of Hebrew poetry, Smart arranges his lines antiphonally in two sections as if they were to be spoken or chanted by two groups alternately. The first section, in which each line starts with the word "Let", is complemented by a corresponding set of lines beginning with the word "For". In Fragment B1, for example, *Let*- and *For*-lines are semantically connected until l. 154, after which a meaningful coherence can primarily be discovered in the sequence of *For*-lines. Owing to the entirely random distribution of stresses within each line, Smart's poetic form in *Jubilate Agno* is best described as posthumous free verse.

More important than either Blake or Smart is James Macpherson, when it comes to tracing the forerunners of free verse. His poetic prose translations of Ossian, whether genuine or faked,[92] had a profound influence on writers like Blake, Byron, Scott, and also Goethe,[93] whose "Ossiangesänge" capture so well the poetic gush of Werther's emotions in their heart-speaking cadence, unrestrained by lineation. The style of Macpherson's work is reminiscent of Old English poetry, however, with occasional glimpses of Milton and Pope. Metro-rhythmically, the Ossian poems abound in harmonic variation between syntactic units so that a linear re-writing of

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[89] For a more favourable account in this respect, see Steele (1990: 198 *et passim*).

[90] Both are mentioned in Steele (1990).

[91] For a more detailed account of the information given below, and for further facts regarding the history and structure of Smart's work, see W.H. Bond's introduction and textual footnotes to his 1954 edition of *Jubilate Agno*.

[92] Albeit interesting, the question of their authenticity is of no consequence to the literary merit of the Ossian translations. The implication that the value of Macpherson's work hinges on its genuineness seems to me altogether inappropriate. For if "Fingal", "Temora", and the other prose poems were not the mere product of a translation but original writing on Macpherson's part, one would normally praise the *Poems of Ossian* to an even greater degree. Wordsworth's stern demand, "Authentic words be given, or none!", at the end of his lines "Written in a Blank Leaf of Macpherson's Ossian" (the whole poem is quoted in John Macqueen's introduction to *Poems of Ossian* (Edinburgh: James Thin, 1971)), appears, therefore, to be somewhat over-emphatic in its indignant tone. The stylistic and imaginative quality of the *Poems of Ossian* is such that it is difficult to conceive of them as pure invention rather than a translation, or at least careful re-working, of some original source. Macpherson himself claims in "A Dissertation concerning the Aera of Ossian" that his translation is "literal", and the simplicity of style "studied" (Macpherson 1812: xvii).

[93] The names are given in John Macqueen's introduction to *Poems of Ossian*, op.cit..

certain passages might yield stress patterns more regular than irregular. Here is, by way of illustration, a short paragraph from "Fingal":

> Such were the words of Cuchullin at the sound of the mountain-stream; when Calmar ascended the hill, the wounded son of Matha. From the field he came in his blood. He leaned on his bending spear. Feeble is the arm of battle! but strong the soul of the hero! (Macpherson 1812: 46)

Observing syntactic boundaries, we may advance the following lineation and metrication:

Such were the words of Cuchullin	XxxXxXxx
at the sound of the mountain-stream;	xxXxxXxX
when Calmar ascended the hill,	xXxxXxxX
the wounded son of Matha.	xXxXxXx
From the field he came in his blood.	xxXxXxxX
He leaned on his bending spear.	xXxxXxX
Feeble is the arm of battle!	XxxxXxXx
but strong the soul of the hero!	xXxXxxXx.

Each line attracts three metrical stresses. The number of syllables is eight except for lines 4 and 6, which have seven. Nevertheless, there are no two lines with exactly the same metrical stress pattern. It is this smooth shifting from one accentual pattern to the next which is so characteristic of the rhythmical continuity in the *Poems of Ossian*. Stress clashes are generally avoided. Macpherson's work suggests the rhythmic spirit of free verse through its pleasing variational (rather than irregular) metricality and reveals that, without linear constraints, the approximation to metrical standards displays all the unaffectedness of a voluntary exercise.

Unlike the Ossian poems, whose affinity to free verse is based on poetic style as well as on poetic intentionality, the King James Bible of 1611 may be compared with *vers libre* only on the grounds of poetic language, since its overall purpose is primarily non-poetical. However, the combination of poeticalness and general familiarity render certain biblical books and passages stylistically influential. Ford Madox Ford, for example, contends that "most of the Psalms of David, the Books of Job and of Ruth, and some of the prophetic writings [....] present an unanswerable case for rhythmic expression of emotions," and thus for "the existence of *Vers Libre* as a form" (1966: 197). What are, then, the poetic devices employed in the Jacobean Bible? Terseness of diction is achieved by a simple syntax in which co-ordination is predominant, and subordination is confined to the immediacy of a straightforward two-level hypotaxis. Parallel sentence structures, phrasal repetitions, and the rhetorical use of anaphora not seldom reinforce the effect of the above syntactic framework. In addition to these techniques, the language is often - for example, in psalms and prayers - poetically intensified by the implied speaker's dithyrambic voice. Such is the impact of poetic expression that W.E. Henley's 1903 edition of the King James Bible sees fit to include among its "*certain departures from tradition*" also a printing device by which "*the poetry is typographically distinguished from prose*" (Henley 1903, vol. 1: flyleaf note). Thus, the linear form of free verse is used throughout the Bible for prayers, songs, psalms, proverbial wisdom, and monologues of direct speech. It is worth noting that the Book of Ruth - Ford's highly appreciated

poetic gem - is printed in Henley's edition as mere prose. For there are no universal standards of poeticalness. We may, then, generally conclude, that, though not *vers libre* in form, the Psalms and other passages of the Jacobean Bible are rightly regarded as a potent source of original English free verse.

Certainly not influential, but interesting with regard to its unusual free verse form is a middle-axis inscription of 1639 by Francis Quarles, *Memorial upon the Death of Sir Robert Quarles*, which consists of "'an elegy of 253 lines upon the death of the poet's brother.'"[94] Its central alignment achieves visual harmony, but forfeits the common enunciative position of a linear left-hand margin. While free verse is usually characterized by a lineation in which all lines burgeon forth from the same peripheral edge only to run out individually according to their respective impetus, the middle-axis inscription is precariously balanced on the visual centroid of each line. Thus alienated from the sequential nature of language, the line has no being other than in graphic simultaneity because its beginning and end are only defined in relation to each other, not in themselves. Free verse with left alignment abandons the metrical constraints of lineation in order to refine the linguistic function of the line; free verse with central alignment detaches the concept of lineation from linguistic temporality so that the line as language ceases to exist. What remains is the visual balance of a mirror symmetry which falsely signifies rhythmic harmony and thereby permits of wide discrepancies in line length without disrupting the impression of poetic smoothness. These considerations uncover middle-axis poetry as a wolf in sheep's clothing. Whether the inscription by Francis Quarles may pass for poetry is quite another question, to which Harold Jantz (in White 1985: 260-62), however, gives an affirmative answer in his essay on baroque free verse. For further investigations into the free verse poetry of baroque inscriptions, we will later turn to German writing of that kind.

Less free-versish in form than the middle-axis inscription, but perhaps a little more significant with regard to the development of freer verse forms is the English equivalent to *vers libres classiques*. Milton and Dryden - as has been observed above - make occasional use of this kind of metrical diversification, yet, the beginnings of classical free verse lie quite obviously in the Elizabethan madrigal. This form of vocal music came originally from Italy, and consisted of poetic songs set for several voices of equal importance.[95] However, the English madrigal was not only musically affected by Italian standards; also

> [c]ertain technical features in English madrigal poems point strongly to Italian influence or even origin. Many are written in Italian "madrigal verse" - that is, the *canzone* stanza, freely combining 7- and 11-syllable lines with no set rhyme scheme (typically one line, such as the first, does not rhyme at all), and usually ending with a couplet and a final 11-syllable line for the epigrammatic point. (Kerman 1962: 28)

[94] Harold Jantz (in White 1985: 262) quotes from John Sparrow, *Visible Words: A Study of Inscriptions in and as Books and Works of Art* (Cambridge & New York: 1969), 131.

[95] For a detailed and comprehensive account of the madrigal in Italy, see Einstein (1971); the Elizabethan madrigal in England is discussed by Kerman (1962); and Catherine Ing in her chapter, "Elizabethan lyrics influenced by music" (1971: 107-150), makes particular reference to the poetic side of the English madrigal.

These characteristics of the *canzone* stanza are not binding. In Ben Jonson's "Echo's Song" from *Cynthia's Revels*, for instance,[96] the number of syllables per line ranges from four to twelve without featuring a heptasyllable or hendecasyllable. By comparison, the linear patterns of certain poems by William Drummond of Hawthornden vary to a lesser degree: more akin to the form of the *canzone*, they mix iambic trimeter and pentameter quite at random, but on the condition that at least one long line and one short line should be linked by rhyme (as in "A Wish"). It is significant that the poet himself "use[s] the term 'madrigal' of a form of verse not necessarily attached to a musical setting" (Ing 1971: 119). Among Drummond's madrigals, we may also encounter occasional instances of lineally regular verse, notably sonnets (such as "Beauty's Idea"); and, among his other poetry, some *canzone* verse occurs (for example, "The World a Game" in *Flowers of Sion*, a collection of spiritual poems). Another poet of the sixteenth century who, in his metrical experiments, also employs the form of madrigal, is Sir Philip Sidney. The pure *canzone* patterns of "Why doost thou haste away" and "When two Sunnes do appeare" are, however, exceptions in a wealth of more regular metrical forms: for the impact of a set of unequal lines is usually smoothed by its repetition in the following stanzas.[97] In view of the fact that the vast majority of English poetry written in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries featured perfectly regular linear patterns, the influence of madrigal verse and its concomitant forms on the mainstream poetry of the time remained, at least in England, rather limited.

In Germany, the situation of madrigal and classical free verse was slightly different from that in England.[98] At first - that is, before 1600 - German translations of Italian madrigal verse reproduced mostly the contents but not the form of the original. Thus, H.L. Hassler's rendering of Tasso's "Risposta", for example, changes the Italian hepta- and hendecasyllables into a four-beat measure of eight or nine syllables per line.[99] Somewhat more Italianate in style, though rather imperfect compared to Italian standards, are Johann Hermann Schein's madrigals of the 1620s. It is also at this time that Martin Opitz writes "Daphne" (1627), a dramatic poem musically performed as *Singspiel*, in which the author employs classical free verse for several - but not all - speeches by randomly combining lines ranging from three to thirteen syllables. The influence of the madrigal in this work seems evident. However, only in 1653, when Caspar Ziegler published his book *Von den Madrigalen*[100], did madrigalian verse become independent of music and achieved literary recognition as poetry. In comparison with its Italian model, Ziegler's definition of the madrigal allowed far more syllabic freedom, not just by admitting six and ten syllables per line for German masculine rhymes in addition to the Italian norm of seven and eleven syllables, but also by conceding the possibility of octosyllabic lines.[101] This standard of German madrigal verse disintegrated gradually as the turn of the century approached, and eventually coincided with the form of *vers libres classiques* (see

[96] This poem has been set to music by Henry Youll, and Catherine Ing (1971: 118) lists it as an example "characteristic of madrigal verse".
[97] See, for example, "Ring out your belles, let morning shewes be spread", a poem which Ralph Vaughan Williams used as madrigal text some 325 years later.
[98] For most of the following information I am indebted to Karl Vossler (1898) and Andreas Heusler (1956, vol. III: 181 ff.).
[99] The example is given in Vossler (1898: 20-21).
[100] For full reference, see Vossler (1898: 13).
[101] As Vossler (1898: 47) points out, the enneasyllable is not mentioned at all, but it occurs in Ziegler's examples.

Minor 1893: 440). Among the representative poets of classical free verse[102] were Lohenstein (1635-1683, for example, "Lobgesang der Blumengöttin"), and also Brockes (1680-1747, for example, "Kirschblüte bei Nacht"), who followed La Fontaine in that he extended the combination of regular stress pattern and irregular line length to narrative forms such as the fable. While the madrigal had certainly had its influence on German verse forms in spite of its relative poetic insignificance, the linear variability of *vers libres classiques* paved the way for the metrical liberties taken in the free rhythms ("Freie Rhythmen") of the eighteenth century. Yet quite apart - as it seems - from this development, there existed a literary genre whose poetic form appears even more unconventional than that of the free rhythms. We are talking about the inscription.

In 1725, Friedrich Andreas Hallbauer issued his *Sammlung Teutscher auserlesener Inscriptionen*, a voluminous collection of German middle-axis inscriptions. Seven years later, a second edition appeared together with a lengthy introduction, in which Hallbauer stands up for the inscription as a literary form whose composition requires utmost acuteness of mind in order to merge effectively both linear form and linguistic expression. These introductory comments culminate in the conclusive presentation of twenty rules for a "good" inscription. It is interesting that some of these rules are reminiscent of poetic principles which, in the twentieth century, have gained popularity under the name of Imagism. Thus, rules 9 and 14 (in §56 of Hallbauer's "Vorrede") reflect the imagist principle of presentational directness and the corresponding tendency towards a verse without the extrinsic restrictions of form. Hallbauer advises his reader:

> Suche die Scharfsinnigkeit mehr in Sachen als Worten, und brauche keine andere als ungezwungene Wortspiele.
> Richte die Zeilen so ein, wie es der scharfsinnige Ausdruck erfordert.
>
> (I translate: Aim at profundity and precision more in things rather than words, and do not use wordplays unless they come easily.
> Detach the lines as required by pointed expression.)

Classifying the inscriptional works in various ways, Hallbauer also distinguishes between metrically regular inscriptions ("in gebundener Rede") and metrically irregular inscriptions ("in ungebundener Rede" (§50)). The editor makes no secret of his predilection for the latter form, in which one is obviously more at liberty to advance profound ideas in a natural manner: "[man hat] mehrere Freyheit die Scharfsinnigkeit desto natürlicher anzubringen" (§50). Having quoted some inscriptions in four-beat measure with consecutive rhyme, he remarks (§41):

> Weit artiger klingen freylich diejenigen, welche in neuern Zeiten verfertiget, davon die Proben in der Sammlung selbst nachzuschlagen sind.

[102] The German term is "freie Verse". However, while the French terminology differentiates at least grammatically between *vers libre* and *vers libres (classiques)*, this distinction does not apply to the German names of free verse. Thus, "freier Vers" or "freie Verse" denote free verse proper in Frey/ Lorenz (1980), whereas in Minor (1893) or Vossler (1898) these expressions refer to classical free verse.

(I translate: However, those which have been composed more recently, sound much nicer - examples can be looked up in this collection.)

There is no doubt that Hallbauer is here referring to the metrically irregular inscription.

While everything points to the fact that the inscription must be accepted as a form of poetry, the editor himself is rather disinclined to call the items of his collection by any name other than "inscription". In that he sets great store on the uniqueness of his book as the supposedly first anthology of its kind,[103] Hallbauer apparently considers the inscription to be a literary genre in its own right. Unlike poetry, which tends to originate in subjective expression, the inscription relates more teleologically to the objective end for which it is written. This distinction is admittedly rather vague, and it seems that the evolutionary step from mere rock-carvings to verbal affluence on paper has rendered the inscription a de facto poem. And yet, the frequent idiosyncrasy of an *inscriptional* middle-axis - a device which is re-invented as a *poetic* form only in Arno Holz' *Phantasus* of 1898 - indicates a certain awareness on the part of the baroque writer as to the literary genre in which he or she is writing. For the canonical poetry of the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries is composed with left alignment. It seems that the inscription employs central alignment precisely because, otherwise, it is with all its poetic characteristics hardly to be recognized as an inscriptional composition. Poeticalness alone does not turn the inscription into poetry. Its specious free verse lineation remains poetically recondite, and serves as a distinctive feature rather than testing under inscriptional camouflage a new poetic form.

Standing literarily apart, the inscription hardly affected the mainstream development in the history of German poetic form. For central alignment was not among the technical devices of standard verse, when - in the 1750s - the linear structures of *vers libres classiques* were superseded by a free-rhythmic avant-garde of metrically unconventional poetry. It was Klopstock, who invented - so to speak - free rhythms,[104] when he wrote his first poem in this form, "Die Genesung" (1754). Although, here, the accentual patterns are irregular and line length varies between six and fifteen syllables, an easy-flowing metre in combination with a fairly stylized language segregates this free-rhythmic work and other poems of the same kind from free verse proper, in which one would expect linguistic characteristics of a more prosaic cast. Referring to his poem "Die Genesung", Klopstock characterizes *Freie Rhythmen* as odes that vary the syllabic measure in each stanza (see footnote 13, above). Thus, the ode serves as a starting-point for the development of free rhythms. Any suggestions that this innovation might have been triggered by madrigalian verse seems rather unlikely, if we consider the stylistic differences between the two forms. Furthermore, the idea of free-rhythmic poems as imitations of Pindar had been rejected by Klopstock himself. And, finally, one could mention Geßner's *Idyllen*: these sketches in poetic prose made a great impression on the literary world soon after their piecemeal publication between 1753 and 1756. To what extent Klopstock may

[103] "Allein man hat noch keine Sammlung von Teutschen sinnreichen Inscriptionen gesehen, und kan sich diese rühmen, dasz sie die erste sey" (§10). Harold Jantz (in White 1985: 262), however, writes that "[in Zedler's encyclopaedia] Quirinus Pegeus' (i.e. Georg Philipp Harsdörffer's) *Ars Apophtegmatica . . . Kunstquellen denkwürdiger Lehrsprüche* of 1655-56 is said to contain the first German inscriptions."

[104] Most of the information given in this paragraph and the next is based on Heusler (1956,vol. III: 280-317).

have been influenced by some of his predecessors must, however, remain speculative. On the whole, his free rhythms reveal sufficient innovative idiosyncrasy to be regarded as relatively independent of any previous steps towards a destabilization of metrical norms in poetry.

While Klopstock wrote either free-rhythmic poems or metrically regular odes, Goethe employed in his verse the complete range of metro-rhythmic shades from traditional trochees and iambs to most individual free rhythms. The poem "Adler und Taube", for example, features regular iambic lines of varying length and without rhyme. Its rhythmic character harks back to the form of the madrigal. By contrast, the dithyrambic rhythms of "Prometheus" - as they unfold in stanzaic groups of irregular size - are distinguished from free verse proper only through Goethe's elevated diction and the unproblematic rhythmizability of his metres. Unlike Klopstock, Goethe was no metrical innovator; he only refined what was available to him. And whereas Klopstock re-shaped the ode for his free-rhythmic poetry, Goethe derived the same verse form basically from the madrigal. A third source appears to be relevant to the free rhythms in Heine's two poetic cycles "Die Nordsee" (1825/6): here, a tendency towards four-beat measure betrays the underlying significance of that metre. Whatever their origins, free rhythms succeeded as soon as they emerged. They did so, however, without dominating the poetic scene altogether, so that conventional metres were by no means ousted as a valid basis of major poetry.

The shift from free rhythms to free verse first becomes manifest with the poetry of Detlev von Liliencron (1844-1909).[105] For, here, we find besides a large variety of regular metrical forms also the rather unpoetic combination of rhythmic spontaneity and natural language. How the poet's free-versish diction develops gradually from a more poetic to a more prosaic form, can be demonstrated with the help of "Zigeunertreiben", an early poem which Liliencron revised in later years. While the first 1877-version (printed in Wichmann 1967: 47-48) looks back to a free-rhythmic style with its changing but smooth stress patterns and its slightly exalted phrasings; the amended variant, published in the "Gute Nacht" collection, reveals an affinity to free verse proper, where the linguistic structures of prose prevail over the sublime licences of poetic language. Thus, in the description of the dancing gypsy girl, the line "Und zierlich die Arme über den Kopf erhebend" becomes "Die nackten Arme über den Kopf schnellend"; and five lines below, the phrase "In das Waldesdunkel" is turned into its shorter equivalent "Ins Walddunkel". In order to condense the wording or render it more concise, Liliencron accepts the possibility of a stumbling rhythm. Yet, he does not create metrical stress-clashes for their own sake. Compare, for example, the following versions of a line towards the end of the poem: "Gähnend stehn vor den Thüren die Bauern" is changed to "Gähnend stehn die Bauern vor den Türen". In this case, metrical regularity improves as the syntactic order of the second sentence, though still retaining part of the inversive quality of the first sentence, becomes more straightforward. Following the caprices of metre in his "Zigeunertreiben", Liliencron composed several other poems in an even clearer free verse style. Among these are "Bismark", "Stammelverse nach durchwachter Nacht", and "Betrunken". They testify to the accomplishment of Liliencron as a forerunner of the new poetry in Germany.

Liliencron's role as poetic vanguard was also acknowledged by that self-appointed revolutionary of German verse form, Arno Holz (see 1962: 72), who rejected the arbitrariness of metre and rhyme, and, instead, argued for expressional

[105] For a detailed assessment of Liliencron's accomplishments in versification, see Ulrich (1970).

necessity as the sole giver of shape in verbal art. He even dismissed free rhythms because they still produced the old hurdy-gurdy tunes inherent in conventional verse by clinging to the empty pathos of an inflated language.[106] In his *Phantasus* - a monumental poetic work first published in 1898, yet preceded by attempts in the same form as early as 1886 (see Holz 1962: 73), and constantly revised and extended until 1929[107] - Holz aims at a clear-cut style where each word is consciously selected to suit its verbal environment, and rhythm exists only as a means of expression, not as an end in itself. Replacing metrical predetermination, this concept of verbal rhythmicity is best presented in a typographic form that accounts for the elementary status of the line as the basic unit of rhythm (see Holz 1962: 92). Therefore, Holz chooses central alignment instead of the conventional lineation with left-hand margin, and calls the resulting middle-axis form the aural image of a poem ("das Ohrbild eines Gedichtes" (1962: 94)). He claims intuitive infallibility for himself when it comes to assessing the correctness of this aural image but is rather uncertain about the factual evidence for his compositional unerringness. Looking for some explanation, Holz eventually digs up two series of numbers - 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 9, 12, 15, . . . and 2, 4, 6, 8, . . . - whose numerological significance consists in their respective relevance to antithetical aspects of his *Phantasus*. It will, however, be seen that the poet's retrospective illustrations of his own theory are not always as convincing as they are impressive.

Poetic form should not exist prior to its linguistic content, as no straightforward thought would ever fit perfectly into the artificial structures of a preconceived shape. Thus, substance ought to create form, and form ought to grow out of substance. The only exception to this precept of unrestricted shape lies in a well-ordered linear arrangement on the page; yet, whether left or central alignment functions as visual determinant is of no consequence. Although the middle-axis is certainly the most conspicuous feature of Holz's *Phantasus*, it is not necessarily the most essential one, since - from the reader's point of view - it merely serves as a means of visually harmonizing the rhythms of a largely irregular free verse language.[108] To the poet himself, however, this symmetrical harmonization, this aural image of the text, represents an important factor in the intuitive process of matching linguistic expression with linear form. As if the formal perfection inherent in central alignment required the impossibility of an equally perfect linguistic realization, Holz feels a particularly strong intuitive urge towards continuously improving the language and language patterns in his middle-axis poetry. He senses, for instance, that the sequence

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[106] In Holz's words: "Der geheime Leierkasten, von dem ich behauptete, daß er für feiner Hörende durch unsere gesamte bisherige Lyrik klänge, klingt deutlich auch aus jenen sogenannten 'Freien Rhythmen'. Sie mögen meinetwegen von allem frei sein, von dem man wünscht, daß sie's sein sollen; nur nicht von jenem falschen Pathos, das die Worte um ihre ursprünglichen Werte bringt" (1962: 71).

[107] Holz worked on his *Phantasus* until his death in 1929. The last edition authorized by the poet himself dates back to 1924/25. Any manuscript alterations and additions are included in the posthumous publication of 1961/62. For more detailed information, see Schulz (1974: 182-183).

[108] This is how Arno Holz responds to the objection that his "Poesie" was but a "Poesie von Gnaden des Setzers":

> Als ob die bisherige "Achse von links" nicht haarscharf von minutiös der gleichen "Gnade" "abgehangen" hatte; nur daß nach dieser Methode das Resultat ein visuell scheußlichstes geworden wäre, während die Anordnung, für die ich mich entschied, für jeden, der in seinem Kopfe "Augen" und nicht bloß zwei Kucklöcher hat, die denkbar vollendeteste "Lösung" darstellte! (1962: 94)

of verbs in the following quotation exhibits a semantic - and, perhaps, rhythmic[109] - lacuna between the second and third line:

wuchs,
stieg, stieß,
zerströmte, versprühte sich - meine dunkle Riesenblüte!
(Holz 1962: 93)

Here is, then, the extended version:

wuchs,
stieg, stieß,
steilte, teilte, speilte,
verglühte, zerströmte, versprühte
sich
(Holz 1962: 130)

Commenting on this improvement, Holz calls attention to the number of verbs, and asks why one verb more or one verb less would produce an inferior result. His answer is numerology; and, ultimately, "I don't know" (see Holz 1962: 132 f.). That the repetition and variation of lexical stress patterns in combination with phonological devices - such as alliteration, rhyme, or assonance - might be responsible for the effectiveness of the extended variant, remains without mention. Holz's numerological explanation is not altogether wrong, but it yields at most a vague feeling of satisfaction, as it contributes only marginally to a possible illumination of the compositional mysteries in *Phantasus*. Whatever the artistic assets of this huge poetic work, there can be no doubt about its literary significance: unique in its form and comprehensiveness, Holz's *Phantasus* stands solitary, away from other poetry - a landmark in the fields rather than a milestone on the historical road to modern free verse. For free verse after Holz did not adopt his middle-axis lineation.

The twentieth century witnessed the final triumph of *vers libre* over metrically conventional poetry. Having traced the development of the new poetic form back to its probable origins, we are now in a position to compare the histories of English and German free verse. In both cases, the Italian madrigal can be said to have justified the emergence of irregular linear patterns in the poetry of the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. These more or less madrigalesque forms of classical free verse became relatively popular in Germany, where Opitz and Ziegler, and - among others - also the French poet La Fontaine, paved the way for Brockes and Lohenstein, two German masters of *vers libres classiques*. In England, however, the predominance of the iambic pentameter left little room for the influence of poetry of varying line length. Thus, the best-known examples of English *vers libres classiques* - for instance, part of Milton's "Samson Agonistes" - are those in which linear variability occurs as metrical licence within the dominant scheme of a regular metre. These poetic developments in England and Germany were not affected by inscriptional writings of the time (which often present a free-versish language in middle-axis lineation), because central alignment was only acknowledged as a form of inscription,

[109] Acoustically, everything was fine, Holz writes, "[b]is dann schließlich mein Ohr den kleinen Widerstand aufgriff, der zwischen 'stieß' und 'zerströmte' mir das Fehlen noch irgendwelcher Inhaltswerte verriet" (1962: 132).

not as a form of poetry. Otherwise, free verse, particularly of the Holzian sort, might have emerged in the early eighteenth century as a potent poetic power.

Without falling back on inscriptional devices, the metrical avant-garde of German poetry approximated free verse form - though not free verse style - in the middle of the eighteenth century. Klopstock's free-rhythmic innovation marked the greatest step in the development of German free verse; and it is not until the latter half of the nineteenth century that Liliencron finished off stylistically, through prose diction, what Klopstock had started as metrical deregulation.[110] English poetry, by contrast, remained fairly orthodox in its metrical foundation until the appearance of Imagism in 1912. There were, it is true, several exceptions to this general rule, but none of these exerted a lasting influence on the progressive strain within the prevailing metrical practice of the time: whereas Klopstock's free rhythms emphasized their close relationship to the ode and thereby avoided being poetically offensive, the instances of posthumous free verse in England or America failed to agree with the artistic spirit of their epoch. Even Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* - probably the most essential and influential work of all posthumous free verse poetry - did not trigger an avalanche of imitations, as the time was not yet ripe for free verse. While Whitman wrote his idiosyncratic self, Pound and his fellow imagists gave expression to the English *Zeitgeist* of the early twentieth century. This was also in Germany the time when free verse acquired wider acceptance in the poetry of Expressionism. If we compare the development of English and German *vers libre*, it is strikingly evident that the course of free verse history, though largely non-disruptive in the poetic evolution of both languages, runs in German poetry far more evenly than in English poetry.

Although the metrical liberation of the line marks an important stage in the evolution of poetry, free verse as an avant-garde mode of expression is soon superseded by forces of a more radical kind that probe not just the form of language, but language itself. We are talking about concrete poetry.[111] This poetic genre puts a strong emphasis on linguistic physicality - in terms of sound or graphic shape - and thus renders the ordinary semantic conception of language either insufficient or absurd or non-existent. A concrete text does not mean, it simply is what it is.[112] The question whether this sort of text can be regarded as verse must be answered in the affirmative in the case of sound poetry, which, if it does not mainly consist of non-syllabic noises, conveys palpable metro-rhythmicity; visual poetry, on the other hand, tends to marginalize or annul the acoustic component of language and thereby ceases to be verse. It is, however, worth noting that the post-modern move towards textual constellations and poetic pictography represents the logical continuation of that process of linguistic visualization which began to evolve with the random linear forms of free verse. And although formal antecedents of concrete poetry appeared throughout history and even in antiquity, the principal influence on poetic concretization derived from word artists like Mallarmé, Pound, Joyce, Cummings, Apollinaire, and, more generally, from the various representatives of futurism and

[110] That the distinction between German free verse and free rhythms lies not only in their different stylistic modes of writing but also in a different subject-matter, has been pointed out by Frey (1980: 32), Lorenz (1980: 103-104), and Nagel (1989: 38): the straightforward, concrete presentation of verbal meaning in free verse contrasts with a complex, abstract representation of the god-like transcendental in free rhythms.

[111] For a comprehensive classification of the various forms within concrete poetry, see Kessler (1976: 195-196).

[112] Cf. Schmidt (1971: 154): "Ein konkreter Text ist, was er ist. Er drückt nichts aus, er teilt nichts mit."

dadaism.[113] The fact that Pound, Joyce, and Cummings are mentioned as influential precursors of the Brazilian "poesia concreta" (Kessler 1976: 94) reveals the language-oriented impetus of this poetic movement: linguistic visualization is not being chosen for its own sake, but it serves as a means of further inquiry into the essence of language. Despite Apollinaire's innovative poems with "multiple figures arranged in unified composition" (Bohn 1986: 53), most of them written between 1914 and 1918, the actual origins of concrete poetry lie in the 1950s when Eugen Gomringer in Switzerland and the Noigandres group in Brazil began to popularize the new poetic form through their works and manifestos. Apparently less significant were Fahlström in Sweden (1953) and Belloli in Italy (1944),[114] and successful promulgation of concrete poetry on the British islands started only in 1963 with Ian Hamilton Finlay and Dom Sylvester Houédard (see Sharkey 1971: 14). The almost world-wide occurrence of a poetic genre that depends not so much on the reader's linguistic competence as on his or her willingness to deal with the textual presentation as it is, makes concrete poetry, perhaps, "the first real international poetry movement" (Sharkey 1971: 22). Yet, what will be the next new product of poetic evolution? Since the early 1970s, post-concrete perspectives have opened up in the form of conceptional poetry. While a concrete text often fails - like a rebus or picture puzzle - to engage the reader beyond the point of its first comprehension, a conceptional poem goes further in that it integrates "two systems of meaning constitution, or two codes with respectively different meaning structures which are not unequivocally translatable into each other," and thereby builds up "complex relational systems between various meanings of the linguistic and optical constituents within the mixed optico-linguistic context" (Schmidt 1982: 120). This intratextual correlation constitutes, then, the basis of an indeterminate communicative process between author and reader. Conclusively, we can say that conceptional poetry recovers what concrete poetry is mostly lacking, namely, interpretability.[115]

Our brief hint at avant-garde developments in contemporary poetry brings to an end the historical excursion of this subchapter. As we have focused only on those metrical innovations that seem to bear specifically upon the general furtherance of free-versish forms, the above outline of poetic history does not pretend to completeness. Thus, changes of metre that affect not the number of stresses per line but the regularity of distributional patterns have remained undiscussed, although their historical significance can certainly be said to have in some degree been conducive to the emergence of free verse. Yet, with all their *intra*linear irregularity, even the most profusely varying doggerel verses do not step across the metrical threshold to free verse since they retain *inter*linear compatibility. It should, however, be remembered that our investigation is principally based on a modern definition of free verse and, therefore, takes only occasionally into account that contemporary usage of the term generally encompasses a broader spectrum of verse forms than we would admit from our point of view.[116] Historical analysis teaches us, after all, that free verse or *vers libre* is not the straightforward poetic form for which it might occasionally be

[113] See Kessler (1976: 155-156), who refers to an article of the Brazilian Noigandres group.
[114] For a good and detailed assessment of concrete poetry in its diverse developments, see Kessler (1976: 93-176).
[115] Thus, Dieter Kessler (1976: 205) writes: "Konkrete Dichtung ist keine interpretierbare Dichtung. Konkrete Dichtung ist kommentierbare Dichtung."
[116] See, for example, our discussion of an excerpt from the 1916 preface to *Some Imagist Poets*, quoted above. Furthermore, a quotation of 1771 by Thomas Gray in the OED features the term "free verse" in connection with the amphibrach. (See OED entry "amphibrach".)

mistaken. Nevertheless, this insight will not hinder us from contrasting, in the second part of this chapter, the historical location of our subject with a purely theoretical classification of all possible free verse forms.

2.2. Towards a classification of free verse

Before classifying free verse on the basis of formal characteristics, we need to determine its place within the wide fields of language and poetry. The relationship between these fields becomes clear if we acknowledge the possible subdivision of all language into poetry and non-poetry. While language is primarily a medium of communication that conveys meaning through spoken utterance or written text, poetry employs the various forms of stylistic enhancement in language to counterbalance the general preponderance of the communicative function. Stylistic enhancement means poetic condensery, which abandons the conventions of language to a greater or lesser degree, and exposes the linguistic medium by revealing the aesthetic values of language structures. However, poeticalness does not suffice as a defining criterion of poetry, since the non-poetry of a novel, for instance, may occasionally exceed a free verse poem in poetic quality. A definition of poetry can no longer rely on linguistic features. Poetry is what is intended as poetry. And poetic intention identifies as poetry even those artistic works in which the linguistic basis is hardly discernible in the midst of other non-linguistic devices.[117] Yet, the arbitrariness inherent in the above definition is historically curbed by a poetic tradition in which linguistic otherness strongly suggests the interpretative significance of stylistic features. Poetry implies poeticalness, and poeticalness requires a close examination of all poetic elements - even if this examination might eventually turn out to be rather unavailing. In other words, the concept of poetry is ideally related to the concept of poeticalness; but the realization of the first does not depend on a realization of the second. The communicative function of language, however, is only then seriously impaired if its *a priori* marginalization through a poetic preconception is complemented by a *de facto* marginalization through linguistic poeticalness. These considerations are important because they enable us to draw a functional dividing line between poetry and non-poetry.

We may distinguish between three poetic forms: poetry written in prose, poetry written in verse, and concrete poetry. While lineation marks unequivocally the difference between a prose poem and a poem in verse, there is no such straightforward criterion for us to keep apart the two categories of verse and concrete poetry, because their respective characteristics are not mutually exclusive. What distinguishes verse from prose does not distinguish verse from concrete poetry. Moreover, the dominant feature of concrete poetry - presentation rather than representation of language through constant focus on linguistic physicality - constitutes only a more radical variant of the poetic principle. Playing with language structures marginalizes linguistic signification; destroying language structures stops

[117] See, for example, M.E. Solt's "Moon Shot Sonnet" (in Kessler 1976: 254), which arranges in sonnet form the various symbols of demarcation as they happen to occur on a lunar photograph in *The New York Times*.

linguistic signification.[118] However, a clear boundary between playing with language structures and destroying them does not exist. The more a poetic text tends towards the destruction of language structures in order to make visible or audible the physical existence of linguistic elements, the more will it be appropriate to regard this text as concrete poetry. On the other hand, the more a poetic text relies for its message on linguistic conventions, the more are we justified in calling it verse, if composed in lines, or poetic prose, if without linear organization. Eugen Gomringer's poem "Worte sind Schatten", for instance, seems more to play with language than to destroy linguistic meaningfulness. Yet, its permutational character, albeit limited, keeps the meanings of its five different words and twelve linear phrases largely within a self-contained web of signification. Thus, an obvious concrete conception is maintained in which, however, the possibility of a semantic interpretation cannot be ruled out altogether.[119] Note that if we chose to account for the Gomringer piece not as concrete poetry but as ordinary verse, we would not even use the term "free verse" because of the overall regularity in the number of stresses per line.

Free verse can be distinguished from traditional verse by its apparent metrical irregularity. A conventional poem features usually the same number of metrical stresses in each line, thereby predicting the line in its temporal - though not necessarily structural - pattern, and elevating lineation to a normative yardstick of metre; free verse, on the other hand, can no longer fall back on the line as a metrical constant but relies for its metre on the variable prosodic structures of language. The two boundaries that mark off free verse from traditional verse and (free) verse from concrete poetry delimit the range of all possible free verse forms. However, the criteria for these distinctions are incompatible, because the metrical relevance or irrelevance of lineation has nothing to do with the linguistic relevance or irrelevance of semantic signification. Obviously, the latter criterion, distinguishing as it does not only free verse but also conventional verse from concrete poetry, is not particularly suitable for a classification of free verse forms. The first criterion, on the other hand, establishes a metrical identity of free verse in which the various structures of metre may well serve as a gauge for the further discrimination between different patterns. Yet, before we discuss to what extent a metrical differentiation of free verse forms is possible and reasonable, we will try to capture the potentiality of free verse composition by examining the various linguistic options available to the poet.

In the definition: "free verse is verse in which the line ceases to function as the central metrical unit," the assertion that free verse is verse must be considered almost as important as the metro-linear specification in the relative clause. What the poet is denied in a free verse poem - namely, to write in lines of metrical relevance - counts less, from a compositional point of view, than what the free verse poet has at his or her disposal in terms of linguistic resources. As verse is characterized by a language that retains in its syllabic elements a minimum of metro-rhythmic significance, and supports through linear organization its intrinsic claim to poeticalness, there exists no verse without syllabic language in lines. Thus, keeping in mind the general failure of free verse to reach linear metricality, we can say that the two components, syllable and line, in their function as constitutive elements of verse, set the conditions for

[118] Here, "linguistic signification" denotes the conventional functioning of language in its proper semantic and syntactic structures. In concrete poetry, signification is essentially a meta-linguistic process whereby the signifier refers only to itself as signified.

[119] Gomringer's poem and some interesting reflections on its poetic status are given in Kessler (1976: 207-213).

poetic creativity in free verse. As long as both lineation and syllabicity remain intact, the poet is at liberty to do what he or she likes. Yet, much depends on the way in which syllables and lines amalgamate to form a poetic whole that deserves to be called free verse. We may, for example, conceive a poem which consists only of one monosyllabic line, and therefore lacks completely the metro-rhythmic effect expected from a syllabo-linear conjunction. In classificatory terms, such a poetic construct would range somewhere between verse and concrete poetry. Other combinations, however, are less exceptional, and they can be analysed with regard to their componential correlations.

The duality in free verse of syllabicity and lineation reflects directly the more abstract antipodes of the acoustic and the visual as the two possible forms of linguistic manifestation. Although certain kinds of concrete poetry incline towards monosensual perception either by ear or by eye, most poetic compositions rely on the simultaneous effects of both acoustic and visual elements. In free verse, where these two components are always relevant to a greater or lesser degree, it is the *relationship* between the acoustic and the visual which determines the character of a particular poem. And in order to illuminate the quality of this relationship, we must try to understand the complementary functions of syllabic sound and linear shape. The line can be regarded either as a given form that needs to be filled with syllabic material, or as a form that comes into existence only as the result of a detached sequence of syllables. Whereas the first assumption may explain linear regularity in conventional verse, the irregular lines of free verse are more likely to be viewed in the light of the second assumption. However, what is most important, no matter which perspective we adopt, is that we acknowledge in all kinds of verse the mutual interdependence of the syllable and the line.

If we consider the linear organization of a free verse poem apart from the *quality* of its constitutive syllabic patterns, we may discriminate between different lines on the basis of syllabic *quantity*. The number of syllables that make up a line in free verse is significant insofar as each linear break disrupts the rhythmic flow of language. For a syllabic sequence to unfold its patterns in a rhythmically effective way presupposes linguistic continuity; and one aspect of linguistic continuity consists in the visual unbrokenness of the constitutive elements in language. This means that, in principle, long lines allow greater significance of linguistic rhythm than short lines. Although it does not make sense to randomly subdivide the continuum of linear length into long and short lines according to an arbitrary threshold of syllabic number, such a distinction - if it is supposed to reflect the rhythmic potential of a line - becomes possible on the basis of syntactic considerations. As linguistic rhythm unfolds within sentence structures, any linear interference with syntax is bound to affect rhythmic smoothness. Thus, if a linear boundary prevents rhythmic coherence within a syntactic phrase,[120] the resulting line becomes in itself rhythmically insufficient because of its shortness. In other words, as soon as a line consists of less than a complete syntactic phrase, its rhythmic patterns lose part of their significance due to the linear disruption of the phrasal rhythm. An exceedingly long phrase, it is true, may well take up the space of several lines without being totally deprived of its rhythmic momentum - provided that linear length compensates for phrasal breaking up - but the fact remains that rhythmic effectiveness is best achieved by a lineo-phrasal co-operation in which the line contains the phrase rather than the other way

[120] A syntactic phrase is defined as an immediate constituent of the superordinate clause. It may consist "either of *one* word or of *more than one* word" (Quirk et al. 1985: 40).

round. That the number of syllables per line is not always of minor importance becomes obvious in those cases where the line consists of a mono- or disyllabic phrase, which of course attains rhythmic significance only in its syntactic context. In the light of the above discussion, we may then characterize the short line as a line that is rhythmically inferior in its tendency to contain less than a syntactic phrase, or else to contain a phrase of not more than one or two syllables.

By contrast, a long line does not disrupt phrasal rhythm because it contains at least one rhythmically self-contained phrase. And since rhythmic self-sufficiency is first achieved in the triform of a wavelike shape,[121] a self-sufficient linguistic rhythm could start with a minimum of three syllables. Yet, in practice, a long line usually consists of more than just a trisyllabic phrase. Our syntax-based characterization of linear length makes possible a clear distinction between long and short lines, but there are also certain drawbacks that qualify the usefulness of a sharp divide between the two linear types. Thus, it seems odd that the above system would admit the possibility of a short line containing more syllables than a long line, simply because syllabic number plays but a secondary role in our concept of linear length. For example, a poem made up of short syntactic phrases is more likely to consist of long lines with only few syllables than a poem featuring long syntactic phrases where the number of syllables is comparatively high even in a short line. Moreover, it is patent that the majority of lines in free verse poetry contains more than one syntactic phrase, and that, therefore, the distinction between long and short lines may at best serve to identify a small percentage of poems as different from the rest. The main problem, however, is presented by the heterogeneous linear architecture that prevails in many poems of free verse. One would have to rely on a statistical analysis for the classification of a poem. Still, in spite of these practical disadvantages, we consider the distinction between long and short lines a possible tool in order to winnow out those forms of free verse which tend to marginalize rhythmic effect through lineation.

Any theoretical results, though, must be regarded as tentative, since the multifactorial nature of rhythm is too elusive to be determined by any single feature. For instance, a free verse poem whose rhythms are split up by short lineation could well balance this lack of rhythmic continuity through other rhythmically relevant factors such as lexical, morphological, or metrical repetition.[122] Regardless of these compensatory possibilities, however, we can still go into more detail about the theoretical implications of lineo-phrasal interaction. Whereas the break of a short line is clearly defined as non-coincident with a phrasal boundary, the break of a long line may, or may not, coincide with the boundary of a syntactic phrase. It is obvious that the integrity of linguistic rhythm is best preserved in long lines whose boundaries are at the same time also phrasal boundaries. Yet, these phrasal boundaries may differ with respect to their rhythmic significance, depending on their syntactic import. A boundary that indicates not just the end of a phrase but the end of a clause or sentence yields more rhythmic thrust than a boundary whose function remains limited to phrasal demarcation - provided that the line contains the full syntactic force of the clause or sentence. With these specifications of long-line variants, we may finally put together a basic selection of possible combinations between the linear and syntactic components of free verse.

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[121] See our discussion of Bräuer's rhythmic concept in Chapter 1.

[122] For a possible example, see the discussion in Chapter 4 of a passage from Paul Celan's poem "Mit den Verfolgten".

line	: short	long	
definition	: line smaller than phrase (exception: mono- or disyllabic phrase)	line contains at least one complete phrase (quantitative minimum: three syllables)	
boundaries	: linear unlike phrasal	linear unlike phrasal	linear like phrasal
syntactic boundary	:		phrasal or clausal
linear classification	: short	long (1)	long (2)
long (3)			

Note that we have not distinguished between different kinds of syntactic boundaries in line-medial position - that is, whenever linear boundaries fail to coincide with phrasal boundaries - because such a distinction, relevant though it may be, would complicate our scheme beyond practicability. Yet, what is left out of consideration need not necessarily be rhythmically unimportant. Rhythm is too complex a phenomenon to be described in full. Therefore, it should again be emphasized that, although we claim general validity for the gradual increase of rhythmic significance from *short* to *long (3)*, in the above linear classification, there is always a genuine possibility for other linguistic features to outweigh the predictions of our lineo-phrasal conception.

Rhythmic significance represents an approximate measure for the establishment of classificatory criteria in free verse. As a quantity that is in itself too vague to be immediately graspable, rhythmic significance hinges for a proper understanding on the manifest features of poetic language and style. The large variety of these features and their simultaneous contribution to the emergence of rhythm renders an unequivocal characterization of rhythmic significance impossible. And yet, if we draw upon certain ubiquitous elements such as lineation, we may capture the rhythmic potential of the various types without making definitive assertions regarding their actual rhythmic impact. The only other ubiquitous component of rhythmic relevance apart from linear variety is manifest in different forms of stress pattern, which will be examined below. Textual ubiquity, however, must be regarded as a prerequisite merely for the criteria of categorization; it is by no means essential to the generation of rhythmic effect. For rhythm is often influenced by linguistic features or stylistic devices that occur only sporadically and, therefore, defy general inclusion in a comprehensive classificatory concept. Among these we count conspicuous repetitions of words or verbal parts (for instance, affixes), and also syntactic distortions and other grammatical licences which may help to increase rhythmic awareness. This restriction qualifies the function of each category as a mirror of rhythmic significance, but it does not invalidate or render useless the differentiation of free verse in its large variety of forms. Classification enables us to predict a probable rhythmic tendency for each class; yet, just as the realization of a classificatory ideal will hardly ever show up in neat perfection, so a full account of rhythmic significance is nothing but vain aspiration.

Linguistic rhythm proceeds from accentual difference. Its stress patterns may theoretically be produced in either of two ways: they may emerge naturally as the result of plain language rules, or they may be imposed arbitrarily on any given string of syllables regardless of linguistic propriety. The artificial rhythms of the second option are, however, comparatively rare, since their realization is practically confined to extravagant forms of performative sound poetry, such as rap poems.[123] Here, the

[123] On rap, see also Attridge (1995: 90-94).

rhythmic features of language give way to the pervasive actuality of a spoken rhythm which may at best fall back on a random selection of lexical stresses, but which hardly ever obeys, in its idiosyncratic wilfulness, the intrinsic temporal organization of a natural linguistic stress pattern. Owing to the wide discrepancy between the rhythms suggested in the linguistic text of a performative sound poem and the actual rhythmic rendering of that poem, there is no use in trying to account for such performance-oriented poetry on the basis of a classification that claims to evaluate the rhythmic significance of printed poetic language. Although the manuscript of a rap poem might explicitly reveal the syllabic positions of beats, none of these possible rhythm markers is predictable as none of them is primarily linguistic. Purely performative sound poetry must, therefore, be considered to range outside our general classificatory distinction of free verse forms, which concentrates only on rhythmic differentiation within language-governed stress patterns.

The accentual structures of a poem are best reflected in the process of metrication.[124] As we desire to fall in step with the perceptually regular beat of an idealized linguistic rhythm, it becomes necessary to assess the relative impact of all metrical elements involved so that the resulting stress pattern can be regarded as rhythmically most effective. For our classificatory purpose, however, we must focus on the linguistic stumbling-blocks that need to be overcome before a final metrical structure can display rhythmic regularity. Irregular lexical and phrasal stress patterns, for example, may appear either obstinate or comparatively pliant when it comes to establishing an ideal rhythm. In order to make sure that this distinction does not interfere with our scheme of free verse classification, we simply reduce the metrical impetus inherent in the concept of rhythmic self-perpetuation - which is tantamount to diminishing the intensity of our rhythmical drive. As a consequence, the number of irregular metrical patterns in a given corpus of free verse poetry will increase, whereas the number of regular patterns will decrease and settle down at a level which includes only the more or less indisputable cases of accentual regularity. One might ask at this point, whether the classificatory distinction between regular and irregular stress patterns might not equally be ascertained on the basis of a structural metre whose accentual distribution is to some extent regularized under the influence of metro-rhythmic self-perpetuation. By way of an answer, let us try to anticipate the outcome of a rhythmic distinction based on patterns that incline strongly towards a metrical ideal. First, clumsy rhythms will be confined to those relatively few instances where no possible promotion or demotion of syllabic accent can regularize the intraphrasal occurrence of a linguistic stress clash. Second, those patterns which convey the impression of being highly effective on account of their perfect regularity may require such significant adaptation of their lexico-phrasal accents that one cannot possibly speak of a smooth rhythm. And third, since the intensity of a contextual rhythmic impetus is largely subject to individual assessment through the metrist, any metrical decision that relies primarily on the power of rhythmic self-perpetuation is bound to be supported by explanatory notes indicating possible alternative metrications. It is obvious that these considerations, while hardly impinging on the metrical analysis of a single free verse poem, affect severely the general agreement necessary in order to account for different degrees of metro-rhythmic regularity within an overall classificatory concept. Thus, without neglecting the advantages of the relative stress principle altogether, we will opt for a metrical reading in which the adaptation of linguistic stress patterns to rhythmic exigencies plays only a minor role.

[124] See Chapter 4 for a comprehensive account of the process of metrication in free verse.

The structures of a free verse metre hinge upon accentual distribution as well as syntactic grouping. To some extent, these two components are interdependent: while a regular stress pattern permits of wide groupings that may extend across the lesser boundaries of syntax, an irregular stress pattern clings to short syntactic phrases in order to avoid accentual clashes within the metrical unit. In spite of this correlation, which seems to reduce the rhythmic significance of metro-rhythmic grouping, the impact of syntax on poetic rhythm does not altogether disappear behind a description of stress pattern regularity. As the full stop at the end of a sentence marks almost invariably also the end of a metrical unit, it is obvious that a poem made up of short simple sentences feels rhythmically different from a poem consisting of long complex sentences, even though the distribution of their metrical stresses might be similar or identical. Syntactic shortness is often reinforced or brought about by elliptical discontinuity, whereas an unbroken sentence structure tends to go along with more elaborate phrasings. Albeit vague, this distinction between narrow and broad syntactic segmentation of poetic language provides an important criterion for the differentiation of rhythm in free verse. This becomes particularly clear when we compare the dynamic flow of stress patterns in broad segmentation with the faltering pace at which the numerous short clauses or sentences of narrow syntactic segmentation unfold their accentual rhythms. Thus, syntax turns out to be relevant to our classificatory concept.

Within the syntactic grouping structure, metrical stress patterns may evolve in a large variety of forms. These accentual shapes or gestalts are important insofar as their relative regularity or irregularity signifies different degrees of rhythmicity. While a perfectly regular alternation of metrical stresses and non-stresses facilitates a rhythmic perception of recurrent beats at equal intervals, a more irregular metre requires the full exploitation of accentual isochrony in order to become rhythmically effective. For the purpose of classification, we may distinguish between stress patterns of regular alternation, variable alternation, and irregular alternation. The first category comprises free verse whose metro-rhythmic quality is characterized by the structurally monotonous repeat of identical combinations between a metrical stress and its proclitic or enclitic non-stress(es). Among irregular verse forms, this ultimate smoothness of rhythm shows itself, from a historical point of view, mainly in *vers libres classiques*; in modern free verse, we will hardly find a poem of such rigid metrical alternation. The second category is best represented by the free-rhythmic poetry of Klopstock and Goethe. Here, the strict change between stress and non-stress gives way to a more varied pattern, yet without obstructing the steady flow of accentual rhythm because stress clashes are generally avoided. In the third category, the rhythmically disruptive power of an accentual hiatus functions as a distinctive feature whose occasional presence in the middle of a metrical unit is often sufficient to mark the difference between rhythmic smoothness and rhythmic roughness. This kind of uncouth rhythm occurs most typically in modern free verse. Conclusively, we can say that the above categories cover the whole spectrum of accentual regularity and irregularity, and also seem to be well-defined in mutual exclusiveness. However, to what extent these classificatory distinctions can be applied in practice will remain uncertain until we submit a sample of poems to our theoretical system of free verse classification.

Before discussing the practicability of categorizing free verse on the basis of differences in metro-rhythmic quality, we should summarize the central aspects of our classificatory scheme. According to the above concept, lineation, syntax, and stress patterns assume major roles in a rhythm-oriented classification of free verse because

of their omnipresence and general rhythmic significance. Thus, in trying to capture the rhythmically relevant shades of linear length, we have shunned numerical arbitrariness by characterizing the line in relation to its syntactic contents: it is the intralinear intactness of a phrase, as the most important rhythmical unit of syntax, which determines the relative length of a free verse line. However, the sentence structure also attains rhythmic significance in itself: we distinguish between a tendency towards short - and, perhaps, elliptical - clauses or sentences, and a tendency towards a more complex syntax of wider structures. Finally, the rhythms of free verse are directly controlled by metrical stress patterns, whose accentual distribution can be classified in terms of regularity or irregularity. If we depict the possible combinations of all distinctive features in a diagram, we obtain a total of 24 free verse categories:

line: short	long (1)	long (2)	long (3)	| ***syntactic segmentation***:/	***stress pattern***:
1	7	13	19	narrow	irregular
2	8	14	20	narrow	variable
3	9	15	21	narrow	regular
4	10	16	22	broad	irregular
5	11	17	23	broad	variable
6	12	18	24	broad	regular

The great number of combinatory possibilities appears, at first sight, too complex to be of practical use for the more or less unequivocal classification of a particular free verse poem; yet, on the other hand, one might argue that the benefit of such a painstaking effort lies not so much in its classificatory result as in the sheer intellectual engagement necessary to fit a concrete poetic rhythm into the abstract slots of a diagram.

Rhythmic significance is most conspicuous in category 24, where the broad segmentation of an elaborate syntax and the linguistic continuity within long end-stopped lines are as much supportive of an effective rhythm as is the pervasiveness of a regular stress pattern. By contrast, the classificatory co-ordinates of category 1 suggest a poetic rhythm of minor importance. While the difference in rhythmic significance between 1 and 24 can almost certainly be said to correspond, as a general rule, to the difference in rhythmic significance between actual poems, there is no such certainty of distinction between the less contrastive categories of, for instance, 11 and 12, or 14 and 20. Nevertheless, each category claims that its allotted poems share a particular set of rhythmically relevant features and, accordingly, resemble each other with regard to their rhythms. This resemblance, however, need not extend to stylistic characteristics (let alone semantic contents), so that a set of rhythmically similar poems may widely differ in terms of wording and voice. Thus, it is of no immediate consequence to rhythmic analysis whether a poet employs slang words or polite expressions, dialect or standard language, fustian verbosity or concise terminology. Yet, since these stylistic criteria play a secondary, more subjective role in determining rhythmic significance, we may indicate either a poetic or prosaic style by adding *p* or *q*, respectively, to the code number. Our classificatory abilities, it is true, are already highly taxed by the all too frequent incongruity between the standardized ideal of rhythmic manifestation and the variability of actual poetic rhythms. Since there is hardly a poem that does not at least occasionally abandon the fixity of its dominant co-ordinates, most classifications rely on the relative preponderance of some features while ignoring the minor impact of others. Yet, whenever a set of opposing elements turns out to be balanced throughout a poem, it will be virtually impossible to classify

that poem. Furthermore, we have to concede that the distinction between the contrasting aspects of a rhythmic feature is not always sufficiently clear-cut to exclude the possibility of interpretative variance. The example below will demonstrate, how complicated the rhythmic assessment and classification of a free verse poem can be.

Classificatory ambiguity informs practically every feature of rhythmic significance in the following untitled poem by John Wilkinson:

> He smears
> fresh shit on his hands
>
> he holds
> them up with his arms
>
> O fleece them
> with blonde hair
>
> thick as trowel, honky
> ice

As regards lineation, lines 1, 3, and 8 are short, whereas lines 2, 4, 5, and 6 are classified as long (2).[125] The penultimate line must be considered long (1), since its boundary fails to coincide with the end of a syntactic phrase. With such a mixed result, it seems unwise to choose just one particular linear category for the whole poem and ignore the conspicuousness of a different but similarly frequent line length. For the influence of lineation on rhythm - though, perhaps, less significant than the rhythmic impact of other free verse features - fluctuates in Wilkinson's poem between the disruptive effect of a short line and the rhythmically soothing effect of lineo-phrasal compliance. Syntactically, one would tend to conceive of the poem's segmentation as narrow, considering the non-hierarchical sentence structure. Yet, on the other hand, the perfectly natural flow of syntactic elements unhampered by elliptical stumbling-blocks, and the phrasal additions in lines 7 and 8 to the imperative clause starting in line 5, convey a rhythmic impression more associated with broad rather than narrow segmentation of syntax. Finally, the question of accentual regularity or irregularity is similarly difficult to decide, as the following metrication will show:

> (1) xX
> xXxxX
>
> (2) xX
> xXxxX
>
> (3) xXx
> xXX
>
> (4) XxXx|Xx
> X.

[125] Note that, although the boundaries of lines 2, 4, and 6 coincide not just with the end of a phrase but with the end of a clause, we do not classify them as long (3) because the clausal power is, in each of these cases, split up between two lines rather than being contained in one.

Here, the restrained power of the metro-rhythmic context in the third unit is worth noting. Were it not for the procedural straightforwardness required by our classificatory scheme, we would certainly put more emphasis on the structural needs of an ideal rhythm than on the natural patterns of linguistic accent, and thus metricize with the help of the relative stress principle:

(3) xXx
XxX.

Given the rhythmic smoothness of this accentual adaptation, the metrical stress patterns of the poem would clearly be classified as variable, if not regular. Without such regularization, however, we must ask whether one intraphrasal stress clash in a poem of 25 words is sufficiently disruptive to justify the poem's classification as metrically irregular, or whether this rhythmic obstacle may be neglected in view of the prevailing regularity in the metrical context. It is evident that there can be no unequivocal solution to any of the above classificatory problems. Thus, if we forced John Wilkinson's poem into one of our 24 categories, we would inevitably misrepresent the inherent diversity of the work's rhythmic features.

Poetic classification can also be fairly straightforward. Take, for instance, Selima Hill's poem "Crossing the Desert in A Pram":

And when our ears fill up with sand,
and everything goes quiet,

lie down in the hood with me.
Pretend the sand is fur.

They'll find us with a little beeping tube
that finds rare animals. They think I am a bag.

The leader of the expedition
can't believe his luck.

He waves the bag about above his head . . .
Relax, I hear you say, *my dear, relax*.

Apart from lines 7 and 8, whose visual breaks mark the end of syntactic phrases, the linear organization of the poem must be classified as long (3), since each line is end-stopped by a clausal boundary. The two exceptions are not so conspicuous as to cast doubt on the appropriateness of this classificatory assessment. More debatable appears to be the question whether the sentence structure tends towards narrow simplicity or broad complexity. In the absence of elliptical language, we prefer the latter classification, despite two clear examples to the contrary in lines 4 and 6. Metrication, then, does not leave much room for speculative analyses:

(1) xXxXxXxX
(2) xXxXxXx

(3) xXxxXxX
(4) xXxXxX

(5) xXxXxXxXxX
(6) xXxXxX (7) xXxXxX

(8) xXxXxXxXx|
XxXxX

(9) xXxXxXxXxX
(10) xXxXxXxXxX.

The regularity of these stress patterns is quite obvious. The only minor digression in unit (3) remains largely insignificant, because the slight structural irregularity caused by the isolated occurrence of two short non-stresses instead of one does not impinge on the poem's rhythmic smoothness. This is why we need not resort to an alternative metrication - (3) XxXxXxX - which would be even more regular but less natural. Conclusively, we may categorize Selima Hill's poem as 24q, on account of its end-stopped lineation, mainly broad syntactic segmentation, regular alternating metre, and prosaic style. It is worth noting that, except for the stylistic component of this classification, the above work appears rhythmically akin to classical free verse.

In its final outcome, a rhythm-oriented classification of free verse, as attempted above, is seldom as ambivalent as in the case of John Wilkinson's poem, and seldom as unequivocal as in the case of Selima Hill's poem. This means, that most attempts at classifying free verse according to metro-rhythmic criteria will have to tackle in some degree the problem of an irreducible diversity among complementary characteristics - a problem which can only be solved by discussing the relevant poetic structures on their own terms rather than imposing strict classificatory conditions. Thus, if we fell back on a statistic analysis in order to decide the issue between the two or three aspects of a rhythmically significant feature, we would often sacrifice to theoretical clarity what in poetic reality is virtually a *mélange* of contrasting characteristics. Whether a poem consists of long lines or short lines, whether its syntax is best described in terms of narrow segmentation or broad segmentation, or whether the metrical patterns tend towards regular or irregular alternation of stresses and non-stresses: there is no universal handle for us to look into the rhythmic features of any poem on the grounds of a clearly defined ratio between the various featural aspects. For poetic rhythm cannot be explained by mathematics. Although the relative frequency of the characteristics is not unimportant, we must also account for their relative quality, whose almost infinite variability may approximately be captured only through intuitive assessment.

Under such circumstances, it is obvious that a less differentiated system of categorization would in no way improve on the scheme outlined above, because the elusiveness of poetic rhythm exists independent of any extraneous classificatory concept. As long as we need to distinguish between relative properties such as broad or narrow syntax and regular or irregular stress patterns, the dilemma of metro-rhythmic evaluation retains its grey area of unaccountability. And a clear, but arbitrary, divide between long and short lines does not necessarily reflect the rhythmic effects of lineation. If we agreed, for instance, that a line of up to seven syllables would count as short and a line of more than seven syllables as long, there would be a definite visual distinction but no immediate discrimination of different rhythmic effects. One might argue that, in view of the difficulties involved in a rhythm-based classification system, a categorization of free verse forms by visual criteria such as lineation, stanzaic patterns, and the general distribution of syllables and words on the page could yield more valuable results; yet, this approach would completely ignore the acoustic component, which in most free verse poems is still as

important as the visual component.[126] Our classificatory method, however, can be regarded as useful in that it compels us to come to grips with the rhythms of free verse on a comparative level. Rather than satisfying merely our desire to understand the rhythms of a particular poem, we now adopt a perspective which enables us to obtain a more comprehensive notion of rhythmic compatibility in free verse. Whether a classificatory attempt eventuates in just one categorial number or in a set of several numbers is of no consequence, if we accept that the process of evaluating free verse rhythm for comparative purposes weighs more than the resulting degree of categorial uniformity. The metro-rhythmic classification of free verse, then, does not shine with applicational pellucidity, but draws its value from the rewarding challenge of a theoretical scheme that constantly tries to accommodate as much as possible of the actual rhythms in free verse poetry.

[126] Christian Wagenknecht (1981: 101-104) attempts a distinction between different varieties of free verse on the basis of stylistic criteria. He recognizes three forms: (1) free verse that is rhythmically close to the German concept of *freie Rhythmen* but, unlike these, not related to the ode; (2) irregular rhythms whose presentation on the page is supposed to facilitate an effective rhythmization (Wagenknecht refers to Brecht's concept of "Reimlose Lyrik mit unregelmäßigen Rhythmen", but one is also reminded of rap poetry); and (3) prosaic lyric, which may even include prose texts cut up typographically. In this classification of free verse, forms (1) and (3) roughly represent an average account of those two free verse varieties which are, in our system, contrasted by the polarization between categories 1 and 24, whereas form (2) is considered by us as too idiosyncratic to be included in a general classification scheme.

3. Critical approaches to free verse rhythm

Following the historical assessment and rhythmic classification of free verse forms in the previous chapter, we will now examine critically the various attempts to describe and explain the rhythms of metrically irregular poetry. The number of works dealing specifically with rhythmic structures in free verse is comparatively small owing to the inherent difficulty of accounting for regular features in a field where they are usually rather inconspicuous. In order to avoid this difficulty, some critics concentrate only on a selection of free verse poems, while others seek refuge in irrefutable philosophical generalizations, which are however of little practical value. The greatest prosodic claims are made by analytical concepts that comprise both metrically regular and irregular verse. Yet, not all of these approaches achieve successfully the comprehensiveness to which they aspire. The vast majority of works discussed in this chapter are written in English and concern themselves with Anglo-American free verse. German approaches to German free verse are included, but their number is limited because they tend to propound interpretations that either generalize or ignore rhythmic patterns. Beth Bjorklund has had a close look at recent investigations by German scholars, and she comes to the conclusion that "criteria for the definition and description of free verse are still lacking" (1995: 547). We should, however, point out that the gist of most English works treated in this chapter - unless they restrict themselves to a particular textual corpus - is also applicable to metrically irregular poems in German. Finally, the subdivision, here, can only provide an approximate overview of the methods employed in the (rhythmic) analysis of free verse; one and the same approach might well be suitable for inclusion under two different subheadings. In order to convey an impression of the large variety of critical approaches to free verse rhythm, our selection tries to cover as many different studies as seems thematically reasonable. While some works focus on rhythm and metre as their central topic, others account for this subject only indirectly or incidentally. Aspects of chronology have been left out of consideration in the ordering of this chapter. We will present the views of practising free verse poets separately and right at the start.

3.1. The free verse concepts of some free verse poets

Walt Whitman's conception of his own poetry is essentially holistic. Thus, rhythm and metre become significant only as part of a poetic work whose form springs directly from the form of its subject. "The rhyme and uniformity of perfect poems," Whitman writes in his 1855 Preface to *Leaves of Grass*,

> show the free growth of metrical laws, and bud from them as unerringly and loosely as lilacs and roses on a bush, and take shapes as compact as the shapes of chestnuts and oranges, and melons and pears, and shed the perfume impalpable to form. (1964: 440)

This idea of the "free growth of metrical laws" may easily be regarded as a contradiction in terms. Where metrical laws can grow as they want, their inherently restrictive character must needs cease to be relevant to any specification of rhythm. Whitman, however, thinks differently: since the perfect poem emerges immediately

from its own subject - the poet being merely "the channel of thoughts and things without increase or diminution" (1964: 444) - there can be no consciously effected control of a metre whose structure unfolds quasi-automatically in accordance with the untrammelled dynamism of its law-giving material, the language of entities. Poem and object merge into an inextricable whole ("The United States themselves are essentially the greatest poem" (1964: 434)), just as signifier and signified amalgamate. The process of signification is reduced to its own trace, and the poet is consumed in the very act of writing. Whitman's notion of "perfect poems" does not allow the weaknesses of mediated poetry. Thus, "[t]he great poets are to be known by the absence in them of tricks" (1964: 451); they will never desire to survive beyond the fulfilment of their catalytic function, for instance, by using unnecessary ornamentation. "Most works are most beautiful without ornament" (1964: 451). And metre *is* ornament except when it is part and parcel of the endless gyration of signifiers and signified around their mutual trace. This process constitutes the perfection of life in poetry.

While Whitman's concept evokes the *spatial* convergence of poetic substance and poetic theme, D.H. Lawrence emphasizes the necessity for *temporal* immediacy. His poems hinge on the present moment as their fulcrum and are essentially free from rules, metrical and other; for where "there is no perfection, no consummation, [and] nothing finished" (Lawrence 1964: 182), no rules can be fixed. Lawrence holds that

> [i]t is no use inventing fancy laws for free verse, no use drawing a melodic line which all the feet must toe. [....] Whitman pruned away his clichés - perhaps his clichés of rhythm as well as of phrase. And this is about all we can do, deliberately, with free verse. We can get rid of the stereotyped movements and the old hackneyed associations of sound or sense. [....] But we cannot positively prescribe any motion, any rhythm. All the laws we invent or discover - it amounts to pretty much the same - will fail to apply to free verse. They will only apply to some form of restricted, limited unfree verse. (1964: 184)

The poet's function is confined to his or her catalytic presence, as verse of the instant brooks no tampering with its ephemeral form, "whose very permanency lies in its wind-like transit" (1964: 183). Rhythm and metre can no longer be conceived as extrinsic to the essence of a poem; and poetic creativity consists in a momentary flash of the imagination only to announce the constant mutability of its conceit. To Lawrence, free verse is highly dynamic like the present out of which it is cut: it is a movie of ever-changing pictures, not a static photograph. And since, in free verse, "[t]here is no rhythm which returns upon itself" (1964: 184), there can only be rhythmic variation.

The deliberate rejection of traditional metres, so fervently advocated by Walt Whitman and D.H. Lawrence, is shared by Ezra Pound only with some qualifications. "As regarding rhythm," the poet is well-advised "to compose in the sequence of the metrical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome" (Pound 1954: 3). Rather than follow minutely the accentual alternations of a metrical template, the composer of a poem had better listen to the sounds of language as they unfold in the phrasal construction of the work. "Naturally, your rhythmic structure should not destroy the shape of your words, or their natural sound, or their meaning" (Pound 1966: 204). Language comes before metre; but does this imply free verse? Pound answers:

> I think one should write vers libre only when one "must", that is to say, only when the "thing" builds up a rhythm more beautiful than that of set metres, or more real, more a part of the emotion of the "thing", more germane, intimate, interpretative than the measure of regular accentual verse; a rhythm which discontents one with set iambic or set anapaestic. (1954: 12)

Pound's insightful approach demands the perfect co-ordination of all poetic elements, linguistic and non-linguistic. He asks for "a rhythm [....] in poetry which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shade of emotion to be expressed" (1954: 9) and thereby appeals to the poet's sincerity as well as to his or her technical skill.[127] The proof of the pudding is in the eating: no poem can be successful that is not successful as a whole. Metre, albeit important, is only one aspect among others. With Ezra Pound, then, the poem becomes its own theory: no theory could be nearer the truth.

T.S. Eliot agrees with Ezra Pound when he insists that "what matters [....] is the whole poem" (Eliot 1957: 32). Yet, unlike Pound, Eliot is more explicit about the nature of rhythm in poetry. His emphasis is not on particular rhythms but on rhythmic variability. "In a poem of any length," Eliot writes, "there must be transitions between passages of greater and less intensity, to give a rhythm of fluctuating emotion essential to the musical structure of the whole" (ibid.). In order to achieve this rhythmic flux in *vers libre*, "the ghost of some simple metre should lurk behind the arras in even the 'freest' verse; to advance menacingly as we doze, and withdraw as we rouse" (Eliot 1965: 187). If the poet has not a definite idea of how to organize his or her poems, there will be no linguistic choice. For "freedom is only truly freedom when it appears against the background of an artificial limitation" (ibid.). A poet cannot avoid using the intrinsic rhythms of language; and since rhythm in poetry is *per definitionem* a matter of importance, any indifference on the part of the poet towards the question of rhythmical form is likely to result in a bad poem. When Eliot maintains that "no verse is free for the man who wants to do a good job" (1957: 37), he implicitly appeals to the poet's responsibility for the success or failure of his or her work: "only a bad poet could welcome free verse as a liberation from form" (ibid.). Therefore, free verse is essentially unfree as the poet can no longer indulge in free expression within a given metrical frame but depends for his or her poetic diction immediately on the intricate subtleties of language as the melting pot of sound, rhythm, and meaning.

While Pound and Eliot extract their free verse from the metrical tradition, William Carlos Williams advocates a completely new poetic metre. Appalled by the lack of metrical order in pure free verse - "*verse libre* is prose" (Williams 1976: 67) - he emphasizes the need for a metre that responds to the rhythms of modern life. In his opinion, "no verse can be free, it must be governed by some measure, but not by the old measure" (Williams 1969: 339). Williams' new metrical system, which he applies in his later verse, is founded on what he calls the "variable foot" (Williams 1976: 38). It is conceived as a rhythmic space which may contain "any number [of syllables] that the sense agrees to" (1976: 68). Each of these units of rhythm, which are usually

[127] Pound writes: "I believe in technique as the test of a man's sincerity" (1954: 9). But, as Willem van Doorn (1921: 6) points out, "[i]t is one thing to be entirely sincere and another to convey the impression of absolute sincerity. But excessive sophistication is an enemy to both, and therefore an enemy to art."

arranged in spaced triple lines, "occupies more or less the same amount of time as the rest" (Hartman 1980: 66). Thus, the isochrony of lines must be regarded as the basic characteristic of Williams' metrical theory. Although this is certainly "a way of escaping the formlessness of free verse" (Williams 1967: 101), it constitutes a rather arbitrary and peculiar means of poetic organization. Since the notion of the variable feet as "spaces in between the various spaces of the verse" (Williams 1976: 39) admits of a considerable flexibility as to the final form of the foot, there is no clear linguistic handle to determine the relative size of the metrical units. Linear isochronism is typographically imposed on the poetic text by an intuited compositional process whose intended temporal structure cannot necessarily be inferred from the poetic material on the page.[128] Williams' theory, it is true, represents a practicable system by which the process of reading can be controlled, and which is inevitable to a proper understanding of metre in his triadic verse; but, owing to its inherent idiosyncrasy, the concept of the variable foot requires explicit metrical instructions for the reader.[129]

Similarly idiosyncratic is Charles Olson's projective verse:

> Verse now, 1950, if it is to go ahead, if it is to be of *essential* use, must, I take it, catch up and put into itself certain laws and possibilities of the breath, of the breathing of the man who writes as well as of his listenings. (Olson 1966: 15)

The implied keyword, here, is intuition. To compose "BY FIELD" is to sense the necessity for form as an "EXTENSION OF CONTENT" and to convey instantaneity by means of a constant change of perception, so that the poem becomes a "high energy-construct" (1966: 16) satisfactory to the poet and challenging to the reader. With this outline of his three "simplicities" (16), Olson combines Lawrence's concept of poetically depicting the instant present with Whitman's notion of immediate correspondence between the form of a poem and its subject matter. At bottom, we encounter the holistic view that

> every element in an open poem (the syllable, the line, as well as the image, the sound, the sense) must be taken up as participants in the kinetic of the poem just as solidly as we are accustomed to take what we call the objects of reality; and that these elements are to be seen as creating the tensions of a poem just as totally as do those other objects create what we know as the world. (Olson 1966: 20)

This comprehensive view is complemented by some fuzzy hints at poetic practice. In projective verse, "the line comes [....] from the breath" (1966: 19); and it is to this "LAW OF THE LINE" (21) that all linguistic elements must submit. The arbitrariness inherent in such a vague lineal conception is confirmed when we read:

> It is the advantage of the typewriter that, due to its rigidity and its space precisions, it can, for a poet, indicate exactly the breath, the pauses, the

[128] For a different argumentation, see the work of Emma Kafalenos (1974), discussed below.

[129] Hartman (1980: 35) emphasizes the connection between Williams' theoretical works and his poetry: "Williams became sufficiently well-known so that through letters and essays he could establish single-handedly the convention that all lines take the same time - though only for his own poems."

> suspensions even of syllables, the juxtapositions even of parts of phrases, which he intends. For the first time the poet has the stave and the bar a musician has had. For the first time he can, without the convention of rime and meter, record the listening he has done to his own speech and by that one act indicate how he would want any reader, silently or otherwise, to voice his work. (Olson 1966: 22)

Charles Olson - in an even more radically fundamental sense than William Carlos Williams - regards the visual presentation of the poem as its direct aural image. Yet although, to Olson himself, this poetic plan may appear natural and inevitable, there exist no definite criteria for its general and unequivocal acceptance.[130] Projective verse is, then, primarily conceived as an artificial means of instructing the poet how to write, and the reader how to read.

Compared to the above-mentioned poets, Ivor Winters assesses more explicitly the possibilities of a free verse metre in that he actually scans some of his own poems. These scansions are based on the relative stress principle, and on an accentual system that distinguishes between three degrees of stress. A metrical foot "consists of one heavily accented syllable, an unlimited number of unaccented syllables, and an unlimited number of syllables of secondary accent" (Winters 1947: 112). In case of accentual ambiguity, "[t]he poet must be permitted to use his judgement [....], and the critic must do his best to perceive the reason for any decision" (ibid.). The justification for a metrical choice hinges on the fact that free verse is, at bottom, subject to the norm of "perpetual variation", which can be achieved by "the approximate repetition of a foot or of a series of feet" as well as by "the use of lines of irregular length" (129). The poet's aim should be "to establish an harmonious and continuous movement" (123). Winters rightly concedes, however, that "the laws of this harmonious and continuous movement [cannot] be defined" (ibid.). Unfortunately, he rests content to simply state these insights without inquiring further into the specific effects of metro-rhythmic variation. Such a lack of objective evidence renders the above concept highly arbitrary and idiosyncratic. Yet, Winters maintains nonetheless

> that the really good free verse of the [imagistic] movement can be scanned in this way, and that the nature of our language and the difficulties of abandoning the old forms led inevitably to this system, though frequently by way of a good deal of uncertain experimenting. (123-124)

The implications of this bold claim are that, for a free verse poem to be successful, it must obey the vague rules of a rhythmic harmony whose linguistic foundation cannot be determined unequivocally - which is an impossibility. Although he clearly senses the various effects produced by different stress patterns, Winters is unable to formulate his findings in universally applicable terms.

The fallacy of an idiosyncratic approach to free verse metrics lies not so much in the neglect of a clearly defined theoretical edifice as in the uninspected induction of general laws from a peculiar poetic design. Yet, a metrical concept which is unequivocally marked as intrinsic only to a particular mode of free verse composition may be fully relished within the scope of its applicability. Albert Cook's *syllabic*

[130] But see Kafalenos (1974), discussed below.

module is a case in point. He advocates a method by which the process of writing free verse can be controlled without falling back on any rigidly prescriptive technique such as syllabic metre or recurring rhyme patterns. In Cook's scheme, line length is defined by a functional module that uses algebraic formulae and other mathematical conditions in order to determine the possible range of syllable number for each line by stipulating a conditioned choice between interlinear relations. Cook describes the advantages of his concept thus:

> The syllabic module [...] offers a structuring both more inclusive than conventional linear meter and more free, since a given line is often chosen from a set of alternatives rather than dictated by the meter. But the alternatives, being always a definable set, avoid at every point the randomness of free verse. (Cook 1982: 6)

This mode of writing, however, does not excuse a poet from the task of listening to the accentual patterns of his or her work. Cook's claim that the syllables of a poem written in syllabic module "should also be heard to undergo a vertical livening" (4) ignores not only the essentially stress-governed acoustics of English but also the primarily sequential nature of all auditory processes in language. Nevertheless, the idea of writing verse within a self-imposed frame of creative alternatives is highly intriguing. Thus, on the basis of our theory outlined in Chapter 4, we might imagine an accentual, rather than syllabic, module by which a free verse poet could control the possible gestalt of a metrical unit and its variational combination with adjacent stress patterns. Since some intricate accentual module is bound to channel the creative energy of any listening maker of free verse, an explicit formulation of modular alternatives would significantly increase the poet's awareness of his or her own metro-rhythmic preferences.

Whereas most poets discourse upon *vers libre* either from a philosophical point of view or with their own peculiar mode of composition in mind, Amy Lowell tries to explain the rhythms of free verse scientifically. Together with one Dr Patterson, she experiments on measuring stress intervals and reading to a metronome. These temporal investigations lead to several conclusions: prose differs from free verse in that the latter commands more rhythmic attention than the former; therefore, the rhythms of free verse tend to be less "syncopated"[131] than those of prose; and the unit which in regular verse is called a metrical foot corresponds in free verse to "a measurement of time" (Lowell 1918: 54). One would observe, in conscientiously rendering a free verse poem, "a more or less consistent beat" (ibid.), while at the same time allowing for a certain degree of *tempo rubato*. Without actually calling the phenomenon by its proper name, Amy Lowell has identified perceptual isochrony as the temporal basis of rhythmic understanding in free verse. However, the use of "time tests and tapping experiments" in order to differentiate between "several forms of *vers libre*" (55) yields a typology of rather vague and spurious distinctions in which the stylistic component is more important than the rhythmic.

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[131] "Syncopation", here, means the non-coincidence of linguistic accent in an actual reading with a quasi-metronomic beat induced by "tapping". Amy Lowell echoes the findings of Dr Patterson when she writes:

> [His theory] is, briefly, that in "verse" the rhythm is what he calls "coincident"; in "prose" it is "syncopated". (Lowell 1918: 51)

3.2. Various critical approaches to free verse rhythm in general

It has been shown in the previous subchapter that poets are often too deeply aware of the infinite complexity in free verse rhythm to attempt a straightforward linguistic explanation of this highly elusive phenomenon. The poet-critic Philip Hobsbaum, however, does not hesitate to discuss the stress patterns of metrically irregular poetry. By way of setting up a theoretical groundwork, he gives a good metaphorical account of the distinction between rhythm and metre:

> Metre is a blueprint; rhythm is the inhabited building. Metre is a skeleton; rhythm is the functioning body. Metre is a map; rhythm is a land. (Hobsbaum 1996: 7)

While, in Hobsbaum's analysis of conventional poetry, the reader is still occasionally reminded of this metro-rhythmic distinction (see, for example, 1996: 12-13), the concepts of rhythm and metre get inextricably conflated when it comes to examining free verse (see, for example, 1996: 106-107). In actual fact, Hobsbaum provides little more than an idiosyncratic description of rhythmic stress patterns: the four accentual degrees of the Trager-Smith system are complemented by pauses that may occur anywhere in the text,[132] and by randomly placed bars that indicate the end of a "foot". Furthermore, he accounts for "an effect by which one line seems to be set against another" (103). Thus, analogous to the prosodic distinction between *thesis* and *arsis*, a lineal distinction can be made between "a line that thrusts [....] and a line that receives the thrust" (111). Hobsbaum explains: "What makes one line thrust, and another line prepared to receive the thrust [....] is a question of the weight of the stress" (113). That syntactic considerations also play a role in this give and take of rhythmic impetus is evident from the examples supplied. For instance, in the following two lines from Williams' "The Widow's Lament in Springtime":

> for though they were my joy
> formerly, today I notice them
> (115)

the rhythmic change from thrust to reception of thrust occurs after the comma. Hobsbaum is uncritically conscious of the performative idiosyncrasy that informs his discussion of metrically irregular poetry: "[t]here is always room for debate in the scansion of free verse proper; that is a characteristic of free verse. What one does is propose a reading, not lay down a metrical grid" (113). The arbitrariness of Hobsbaum's procedure and his tendency to conflate rhythm and metre become particularly obvious in the following reading of the Whitman line, "You are the gates of the body, and you are the gates of the soul". Whereas we would argue that the metro-rhythmic quality of this line depends on its highly effective stress pattern variation between two syntactically parallel units of metre, Hobsbaum writes:

> To prevent the line from falling into too metrical a pattern, it is necessary to place a stress of reasonable weight on "and" rather than the second

[132] The Whitman line, "This is the female form", is weighted down by pauses after every single word except the article. See Hobsbaum (1996: 106).

> "you". [....] The intonation is that of the orator rather than the expositor, and that is very much the tone characteristic of Whitman. (107)

It is not the reading as such but the argument behind that reading which fails to be convincing.[133] This general lack of supportive reasoning is typical of Hobsbaum's discussion of rhythm in free verse.

Unlike Hobsbaum, Charles O. Hartman puts much emphasis on the clear definition of crucial terms. He considers the prosody of a poem to be "*the poet's method of controlling the reader's temporal experience of the poem, especially his attention to that experience*" (Hartman 1980: 13), and defines metre as "*a prosody whose mode of organization is numerical*" (17). In accordance with these definitions, Hartman argues that free verse is prosodically, but not metrically, ordered: "*the prosody of free verse is rhythmic organization by other than numerical modes*" (24-25). And prosodic analysis must be considered important, because "it is prosody of one kind or another that turns rhythm into meaning" (27).[134] Lineation plays a key role in Hartman's prosodic concept. It often counterpoints the syntactic structures of free verse, and is sometimes used to mark off conspicuous stress configurations. A linguistic feature which acquires rhythmic significance becomes automatically relevant to the prosody of a particular poem. With this eclectic approach, Hartman tries to account for the large variety of free verse forms; he fails to see, however, that, even in those cases where a linguistic stress pattern is irregular, rhythmic perception derives primarily from accentual undulations. Syntax and lineation, it is true, also contribute to the overall effect of poetic rhythm, but from our point of view they tend to function as rhythmic modifiers rather than pacemakers. Conclusively, we may characterize Hartman's approach as perceptive and interesting, although we would not agree with the upshot of his findings, namely, that free verse rhythm cannot be explained on a general theoretical basis valid for all free verse poems, but depends for a proper understanding on the particular prosody peculiar to a particular poem.

Hartman's principal assumption of an eclectic prosody for free verse is shared by Alan Golding, who claims that any prosodic approach may only "analyze local rather than general effects" (Golding 1981: 65), because of the striking differences between various forms of free verse. In order to be able to make a prosodic statement, Golding proposes a methodology based on flexible guidelines. "These guidelines," he explains, "do not claim to be predictive rules; rather, they construct matrices of *probability*" (64). They constitute a prosodic system that reveals itself

> by lineation devices: [*sic*] by intonation, as determined by the cooperation (or lack of it) between syntax, phrasal breaks, stress distribution, and all other available grammatical and phonological devices; [and] by the occurrence of particular types of rhythm at particular points in the poem. (67)

This is a delightfully holistic approach, but it self-consciously succumbs to the performative fallacy. Golding's argument that a poem should be read as rhythmically as possible does not suffice to allay any misgivings about his performance-based

[133] In Whitman's construction, the second pronoun does not require emphasis because it refers contextually to the same noun as the first pronoun. (The complete fifth part of Whitman's "I Sing the Body Electric" is given in Hobsbaum 1996: 104-105.)

[134] Cf. also Harvey Gross' dictum that "meter, and prosody in general, is itself meaning" (1964: 12).

prosody, because there is usually more than one possibility of rhythmizing a given free verse text. The prosodic analysis, then, of Olson's "In Cold Hell, In Thicket" is reasonably perceptive, yet not to the extent of including alternative readings: since Golding focuses on the interrelationship between accentual patterns and other poetic devices, his criteria for the assignment of metro-rhythmic stress remain generally unquestioned. He is, however, aware of the preliminary character of his prosodic concept when he reminds us that

> these tools do not constitute rules, nor do they claim to be universally applicable. They simply offer a number of possible approaches, of "things to be listened for" in the reading of free verse. Different tools will be appropriate for different free-verse poets, but with the study of free-verse prosody at such an embryonic stage of development it should at least be clear that tools are available. (77)

Despite its idiosyncratic defects, Golding's essay makes a valuable contribution towards a better understanding of rhythm in free verse.

Compared to the prosodic concepts of Hartman and Golding, Donald Wesling's approach to free verse is even more comprehensive. Assuming a cognitive perspective, Wesling contends that the reader of a free verse poem derives pleasure from a wide variety of rhythmic patterns. Since "every poem creates its own convention [....] the ideal unit of poetic study is not the notional foot but the whole poem" (Wesling 1971: 161). The unpredictability of rhythm in free verse, then, calls for a "multi-unit prosody" whereby the poem is understood as "a system of relations rather than an addition of particles" (ibid.). These relations become manifest in the nodes of interaction between metrical and grammatical structures. Although Wesling's practical use of grammetrics concentrates "primarily on the relation of sentence and line" (Wesling 1985: 168), the ultimate aim is, of course, a "complete study [....which] would offer factors above and below the prosodic unit of the line and the grammatical unit of the sentence" (ibid.).[135] Beyond this purely textual level of interpretation, Wesling envisages the "Compleat Prosodist, [who, like the poet,] must reenact the motions of the writing and reading mind; and must also and in addition [....] study the wider historical conditioning of attention" (1985: 169). Such a complex integral approach to free verse (and, indeed, to all kinds of poetry) is desirable from a theoretical point of view; to what extent this *prosodia ultima* is able to yield practical insights remains to be seen. For Wesling's specimens of grammetrical free verse interpretation are, on the whole, too general to be convincingly illuminating.[136]

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[135] Richard D. Cureton (1992: 62-67) discusses a forthcoming work by Wesling, *The Scissors of Meter: Grammetrics and Interpretation*, which would obviously represent the ultimately complete grammetrical study. In my bibliographical research, however, I have not been able to obtain any publication data about this work.

[136] Quoting, for instance, the last twenty-eight lines of Pound's Canto II, Wesling comments: "[t]he critic as amateur metrist can scan this, as linguist can describe how the long, loose-jointed sentence is generated. I propose to do neither" (1985: 155). Instead, he gives a general account of the grammetrical relations: "[t]he passage is phrasal in its metric as in its grammar: cumulative, processional, Whitmanesque, with its verbs turned to participles and with an abundance of adjectives and nouns in heavy modifications and compounding of subjects" (ibid.). A detailed analysis of accentual structures seems to be unavailing "in such a context, where no line repeats a pattern from the line previous" (156). Although his concept is designed to account for grammetrical interaction at any level between the syllable and the poem as a whole, Wesling qualifies the idea that grammetrics is generally applicable throughout the hierarchical scale of poetic elements when he writes: "The scale's

Contrary to the all-embracing methods mentioned above, Emma M. Kafalenos tries to explain free verse rhythm by a principle of linear isochrony. She argues:

> The primary reason for a free-verse line to end where it does must be the need for a pause or caesura at that point. Since short lines are followed by a longer empty space on the page than long lines are, short lines are sometimes thought to be followed by longer pauses than long lines are. If this principle is accepted, then the free verse line itself is a generally isochronous unit. (1974: 15-16)

Taking her cue from William Carlos Williams' notion of the variable foot, Kafalenos believes that "Williams, in consciously adopting the line as the unit of measure and in considering it a generally isochronous unit, has, in fact, discovered the basic rhythmic element of free verse" (50). This generalization is supported by a physiological argument in the Olsonian vein, namely, that "[t]he breath controls the ending of the line and we know from its corollary in music that the breath tends to be an isochronous measure" (66). On the evidence of unled choral reading, Emma Kafalenos further presumes that "[t]he line [....] is perhaps an even more stable isochronous unit than the foot" (56). But the fact that the experiments with unled choral reading - conducted by Paul C. Boomsliter, Warren Creel, and George S. Hastings, Jr.[137] - make use of metrically conventional poetry should not lead us to expect similar results from a choral reading of free verse. Nevertheless, Emma Kafalenos maintains that "it would be even more interesting to apply the method to a study of free-verse prosody [....in order] to determine the extent to which the free verse line is read as an isochronous unit" (58).

From our point of view it must be doubted whether an unled choral reading of free verse poetry would approximate linear isochrony, especially, if the length of lines varies significantly. Unless we expressly stipulate equal time for each line, syntactical considerations are likely to prevail in the temporal organization of a free verse poem. The fallacy of Kafalenos' central assumption, however, lies not so much in a faulty argumentation as in the unwarranted idealization of its final conclusion. We may postulate a line-terminal pause, and infer that its influence on the temporal structure of the line increases with linear shortness because the isolation of fewer words or syllables commands a relatively greater amount of attention and emphasis than the smooth continuity of language in long lines.[138] As a consequence, short lines tend to be emphatically lengthened. Yet, this tendency towards compensatory lengthening would not normally exceed the limits set by linguistic requirements such as syntax and semantics so that the ideal of a linear isochrony remains, in free verse, generally unattainable. Emma Kafalenos projects this ideal onto all kinds of poetic language in lines, and suggests that free verse in particular depends on isochronous lines because it lacks a linear metre. We have revealed the one-sidedness and practical insufficiency of this concept by pointing up the intrinsic inertia of its constitutive linguistic elements.

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delicacy of description even permits it to include an adequate treatment of meter and rhyme, *should a given text warrant such treatment*" (125, my emphasis). In his close examination of Gerard Manley Hopkins' poem "Carrion Comfort" (125-133), Wesling demonstrates how, in sprung rhythm, metre and syntax are grammetrically interrelated. He should try to do the same with free verse.

[137] Emma Kafalenos supplies the following reference: *PMLA*, 88, 2 (March 1973), 200-208.

[138] The emphatic function of lineation is discussed in a very interesting essay by Richard Kell (1963).

In order to avoid the pitfalls of a detailed rhythmic analysis, some free verse critics resort to profound philosophical reasoning. Jost Frey, for example, clearly sees that free verse substitutes an attention to rhythmic detail for an attention to the rhythmic whole, and that to abandon the rule of a regular metre is to forgo the freedom of rhythm within the confines of a prescribed metrical scheme.[139] However, as soon as the rhythmic structure falls apart, acoustic elements are displaced by visual elements. "Wo kein Vers mehr spricht, steht er noch geschrieben" (Frey 1980: 58) - verse still remains written where it speaks no more. This kind of free verse represents the disintegration of rhythm in that it refers to metrically regular verse as the verse form whose rhythmic patterns are rejected. Thus, purely written verse exists as verse only in the negation of metrically regular verse.[140] Frey demonstrates his post-modernist approach with an illustrative analysis of Paul Celan's poem "Engführung", whose specific visual form lends itself convincingly to this interpretative mode. Yet, although the written presence of the text on the page seems to subdue its acoustic potential, Frey does not rule out the possibility of regarding the poem's lineal format as a means of instructing the reader how to recite the poem (see Frey 1980: 66). The existence of such a possibility indicates that the disintegration of rhythm has not yet come to an end but is still in progress. Frey's essay, then, refuses to explain rhythm in free verse beyond its referential function as the signifier of versification.

That the urge towards a formal assessment of accentual patterns in free verse may lead to rather unsatisfactory results, becomes obvious in the work of Richard M. Meyer (1911). In trying to find the law that rules the free-rhythmic poetry of German poets, he contends that the unity of rhythm is brought about by an analogous correspondence between the verse lines that constitute a strophic period.[141] Poems like Goethe's "Mahomets Gesang" or "Prometheus", for which Meyer's theory is inadequate, are simply ousted from the club of free rhythms and labelled "rhythmenhaltige Prosa" (1911: 282) - rhythmic prose. In another early twentieth-century approach, that of C.E. Andrews (1918), a sound understanding of the principles that control the rhythms of free verse is only superficially illustrated by a sample of metro-rhythmic analyses. Andrews recognizes that "by [the] effects of repetition and variation in rhythm and line length free verse may gain the advantage of a form of its own" (1918: 192); but, constrained by certain preconceptions about the possibilities of free verse construction,[142] he fails to come up with a close

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[139] In Frey's own words: "An die Stelle des Zwangs zum Ganzen tritt der Zwang zum Detail. [....] Der Zwang zum Ganzen bestätigt die Freiheit des Einzelnen" (1980: 52). The last sentence recalls T.S. Eliot's dictum that "freedom is only truly freedom when it appears against the background of an artificial limitation" (1965: 187).

[140] Frey argues as follows:

> Der geschriebene Vers ist nicht mehr aktualisierbar. Die Schrift gibt nicht eine Versrede wieder, die aus ihr zurückgewonnen werden kann, sondern sie repräsentiert den Vers, der keiner ist. Aber anstatt das Problem dadurch für erledigt zu halten, daß der Vers keiner ist, kann man es darin sehen, daß er repräsentiert ist. Der schriftliche Vers als Repräsentation des Verses, der keiner ist, ist der Vers, der nur als repräsentierter gegeben ist. Schrift ist hier Repräsentation dessen, was nicht ist. (1980: 59)

[141] In Meyer's words: "die Einheitlichkeit des Rhythmus wird durch den analogen Bau der die Periode konstituierenden Glieder gewährleistet" (1911: 282). And, on a previous occasion, he writes: "im Gegensatz zu allen Theoretikern der freien Rhythmen bin ich nun der Ansicht, daß lediglich aus der 'Strophe', oder wie wir allerdings besser und weniger irreführend sagen müßten, daß lediglich aus der 'Periode' der Einzelvers und der gesamte Aufbau der freien Rhythmen verstanden werden kann" (1911: 274).

[142] Cf., for instance, the following two quotations:

examination of rhythmic patterns. If one analyses a selective textual corpus, it is safer to make pronouncements only with regard to the rhythmic quality of that particular selection, rather than claiming the general validity of any findings. Richard M. Meyer and C.E. Andrews tend to be too dogmatic in their approaches: rather than including whatever poem happens to be free verse, they exclude the ones which do not fit their concepts.

3.3. Case-studies

While many universal approaches to free verse rhythm depend on a more or less random exemplification of certain assumptions, case-studies focus on particular verse instances in their attempt to illuminate the rhythmic patterns of metrically irregular poetry. The insights resulting from this kind of study may to a varying degree be deemed representative of free verse in general. In her interpretative analysis of Volker Braun's *Der Stoff zum Leben 1-3*, Beth Bjorklund reveals the close connection between Braun's allusions and references to literary works of the past and his use of traditional metres within the overall free verse framework. She comes to the following conclusion:

> The structuring principles are dispersed over various registers. The "freedom" of free verse allows the poet to deploy elements from the repertoire or to modify them or to invent new ones, as the need may arise. [....] Traditional prosodic components are broken down into their constitutive elements. [....] These elements are modified, and the form is then reconstituted to yield a new array. Braun's free verse, like that of many others, draws heavily on the tradition, a tradition that it also intends to subvert. (Bjorklund 1995: 563-564)

The last sentence conveys the impression that Braun's mode of free verse composition is generally prevalent among contemporary poets. This is clearly not the case. Yet, to reproach Bjorklund with the inaptitude of her vague quantitative statement ("like that of many others") would be to ignore the qualitative dimension of her argument. "Appropriation is indeed a hallmark of postmodernism" (1995: 564), she writes, and thereby indicates that a skilful handling of linguistic material culled from the poetic heritage may successfully figure as a means of writing free verse. Metre is, of course, part of that linguistic material, and a distinct notion of the way in which conventional patterns are deployed within an unconventional poetic form provides a good starting-point for further investigations. However, the metrical

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> Another questionable subject for rhythmic expression seems to me to be the realistic character sketch of Mr. Edgar Lee Masters. The *Spoon River Anthology* contains some of the most forceful and revealing vignettes of human lives that recent literature has produced; but do they gain anything by the form in which they are printed? Is a rhythmic utterance which the form impels us to give them at all appropriate to the subject matter? (Andrews 1918: 189)

The questions are rhetorical questions: they remain without answer because they answer themselves. Here is the second quotation:

> A successful handling of run-on lines in free verse is only possible when the line is made distinct by rhyme. (Andrews 1918: 193)

Such a statement fails to do justice to a large number of free verse poems.

shadows of the past do not lurk in every poem; but where they lie implicitly hidden or stand explicitly exposed, there we need to account for them.

Traditional metres are central also to Annie Finch's theory of the *metrical code* - a theory which explores "a new idea about the relation between metre and meaning in poetry" (Finch 1993: 1). Dealing with "poems in which meters are available for expressive as opposed to strictly conventional purposes" (12), the metrical code interconnects three variables: connotative reference to formal antecedents, poetic meaning in its linguistic and associative aspects, and metro-rhythmically flexible stress structures.[143] Annie Finch explains:

> The word *code* implies that meter in a metrically organic poem can function like a language, carrying different information at different points within a poem. Since semantic content interacts differently with meter from line to line or passage to passage of the same work, metrical associations create their own layer of literary meaning as they develop throughout a poem. (1993: 12)

The practical application of the metrical-code theory to poems by Dickinson, Whitman, Stephen Crane, Eliot, Audre Lorde, and Charles Wright yields interpretative results that are, however, not all equally felicitous. For instance, in discussing the role of the pentameter line in Emily Dickinson's poetry, Finch makes very interesting remarks about the way in which this patriarchal metre, wherever it sporadically occurs, reveals a struggle between the feminine desire for freedom from masculine power structures and the inclination to give in to the patriarchal forces, if only to appropriate them for one's own purpose. In the metrically variable verse of Dickinson, then, even a vague decasyllabic approximation to iambic pentameter - "For the site of the Kingdom of Heaven" (from poem 959, see Finch 1993: 24) - is recognizable as such; whereas, in the free verse context of Audre Lorde's poem "Equal Opportunity", the ten- or eleven-syllable line, "Blindness slashes our tapestry to shreds" (see Finch 1993: 136), would not necessarily be associated with pentameter, especially, since, in its hendecasyllabic version, the line is most naturally metricized as a perfectly regular trochaic hexameter catalectic.[144] The idea that "the metrical-code theory sees meter as part of the reality to which some poets, consciously or unconsciously, refer" (16) expresses, perhaps, too much confidence in the general semantic force of metrical patterns: where poetic stress structures are conspicuous, they may certainly become contextually meaningful; but where they remain comparatively indistinct, their significance should not be unduly invoked.

Unlike the above-mentioned studies by Bjorklund and Finch, where any metrical findings refer to some extrametrical entity, Sister M. Barry's *Analysis of the Prosodic Structure of Selected Poems of T.S. Eliot* focuses on the relationship between a

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[143] According to Annie Finch, the theory of the metrical code concentrates on
(1) "meter as a cultural artefact that evokes previous literary associations and relates a poem to a poetic lineage" (12);
(2) "special cases rather than conventions, analyzing the interaction between meter and meaning line by line or even foot by foot within a poem" (12);
(3) "the information value of specific occurrences of metrical patterns within a poem" (12).

[144] While the Lorde-line might well be regarded as a pentameter line, such an interpretation should not be taken for granted. Annie Finch accepts, here, as a given what would normally require further metrical investigation.

prosodic unit and its adjoining neighbours. Barry proposes a triple approach to the accentual rhythms in her poetic corpus, examining the stress patterns in terms of group cadence, general cadence, and measure. Sound and meaning determine the units relevant to group cadence in that a syllabic centroid may, by virtue of its lexico-semantic emphasis, subordinate up to six or seven relatively unstressed syllables (see Barry 1948: 2-3). General cadence prescinds from these semantic groupings; it operates on the level of the line and distinguishes between regular and irregular stress patterns, which are subdivided into abstract units called *feet*.[145] By measure or balance, then, Sister Barry explores the way in which adjacent structural elements in verse are organized. Her investigations target the relation "between syllables, between rhythmical units (groups), and between metrical units, such as the foot, the line, and the stanza" (Barry 1948: 76). While the intention to describe accentual patterns in terms of their comparative similarity is clearly a step in the right direction towards metro-rhythmic understanding, Barry's inflexible rules for stress assignment render her analysis idiosyncratic and occasionally objectionable from a metrical point of view, since common devices such as promotion and demotion are left out of consideration.[146] Moreover, there are hardly any conclusions drawn as to the rhythmic effect of certain combinatory results; instead, we get a huge amount of statistical information. Although that may be interesting and useful, it does not explain why a reader responds to a poetic rhythm as he or she does.

In a similarly painstaking, but not statistical, approach, Rosemary L. Gates examines the prosodic structure of Whitman's "Lilacs". She uses phonological tools, and argues: "[s]ince English is a four-stressed system of sound, a rhythmical analysis of sound units must distinguish four relative levels of prominence and determine the patterns of their occurrence within the sound unit" (Gates 1985: 249). Syntactic groupings give form to these sound units, primarily, in accordance with information blocks. But also "the rhythmic patterns established in a poem will influence to some extent the placement of boundaries" (251), so that it, then, becomes necessary to allow for a certain interdependence of prosodic features. In the actual analysis, Gates assigns three degrees of stress to the prominent syllables within a sound unit, leaving the unstressed syllables unmarked. While the intensity and order of stresses is highly significant in the comparative analysis of a sound unit sequence, Gates fails to account for the number of unstressed syllables between the stressed ones. Here lies the major drawback of her otherwise very perceptive, albeit sometimes peculiar, prosodic examination: although isochrony controls to some degree the syllabic material that fills the *temporal* gap between one stressed syllable and the next, there still remains the rhythmic influence of non-stresses as *structural* elements. As it stands, Rosemary Gates' study yields only limited, though interesting, insights into the significance of Whitman's prosodic patterns, because it neglects the function of the weakest link in the accentual structure.

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[145] Although Barry recognizes that "*foot*, strictly, has no meaning apart from regular general cadence or meter," and maintains that "[i]f the general cadence is irregular, namely, if the relation of stress to slacks across the line varies, the line consists of different types of *units* (those provided by the rhythmic groups) but not of different kinds of *feet*," she later conflates these concepts in her own analytical terminology. See, for instance, Barry (1948: 84).

[146] Line 359 of *The Waste Land, V*, "But there is no water" (in Barry 1948: 95), may serve as an example: Barry stresses the third, fourth, and fifth syllables - apparently "in accordance with Eliot's reading" (1948: 95 footnote) - but she fails to see that the mere transcription of a performative stress pattern does not give us the underlying metre. A reading which stresses the third, fourth, and fifth syllables may be perfectly compatible with a regular trochaic metrication of the line: XxXxXx.

3.4. Linguistic approaches

There is no doubt that linguistic elements play a role in metrical analysis; yet, to what extent metrics relies on linguistics remains in part a matter of preference. In his essay, "Metrics between Phonology and Theory of Literature", Achim Barsch comes to the conclusion that "[m]etrics can be properly construed as a theory-element of a phonological theory" (1995: 426). This phonological construction of metrics requires a rule-governed process "by which an abstract metrical pattern (AMS) of a particular metrical-phonological type (MPT) is linguistically realized (SR) in the recitation (REZ) of a line of verse" (417). Because of its inherent rigidity on level AMS, Barsch's concept does not apply to the metrical analysis of free verse. Linguistic approaches often depend too much on firm scientific insights to permit of a cognitive flexibility in metrics and poetics. As Rolf Kloepfer (1971: 96) observes:

> Da die linguistische Poetik immer nur auf das zurückgreift, was in der Linguistik selbst als einigermaßen gesichert erscheint, kann sie nur einen Teil der "Freiheiten" (Abweichungen der Sekundärstrukturen) erfassen, die innerhalb der modernen Dichtung zur poetischen Kommunikation genutzt werden.
>
> (I translate: since linguistic poetics always relies only on that what, in linguistics proper, is generally considered to be indisputable, it can only account for part of the "liberties" (deviations of secondary structures) that are used in modern poetry for poetic communication.)

Thus, in order to cope with the elusiveness of metro-rhythmic patterns in free verse, linguistic theories are well-advised to take on board a variable notion of rhythm and metre.

Experimental linguistics relies on performance for an investigation into the rhythms of free verse. Magdalena Sumera (1984), for example, analyses the temporal relations between the various distances ("feet") measured from one stressed syllable to the next stressed syllable, but not including it. She compares, however, not only the horizontal relation between adjacent feet, but also the vertical relation between two different readings of the same foot by the same reader - hence the unassuming phrase, "Towards the Study of an Idiolect", in the title of her article. The purpose of measuring the stress intervals in two performances of T.S. Eliot's "Death by Water" is to provide a tentative answer to the question whether, in comparison with conventional poetry, free verse "still tend[s] in the direction of isochrony or not" (Sumera 1984: 226), and to what extent it can, therefore, be said to feature rhythmicity as one of its qualities. Sumera's findings are not particularly illuminating, since "the measurements obtained [in her experiments] point to isochrony being an underlying tendency at best, with limited surface manifestation" (239). There is no mention of *perceptual* isochrony as the temporal basis of rhythmic cognition (see Chapter 1); yet, without the support of this concept, any investigations into *physical* isochrony remain comparatively meaningless. Magdalena Sumera acknowledges the shortcomings of her experimental results, and admits that

> English rhythm is far more complex than the concept of isochrony will permit. My own impression has always been of two alternating systems; one isochronous and one syncopated; to my mind, the temporal relations are such as one hears when duple time is played against triple with the syncopated system constantly checking the surface isochronous one. There is, in addition, an underlying beat, in good readers anyway. (239)

Here, the notion of an underlying beat is particularly important, as it suggests that free verse is most effectively rendered if consciously (or unconsciously) metricized. Unfortunately, Sumera does not say how far Professor Abercrombie, whose recordings she analyses, has been aware of any recurrent pulse forming the rhythmic foundation of his recitations. This is precisely what would be of interest, namely, to compare the difference in rhythmic quality between several renderings of the same poem by the same person, but with varying degrees of attention being paid to rhythmicity.

In metro-rhythmic studies, it is generally more rewarding to examine the *langue* rather than *parole* of a poetic text, because the rhythm of a particular language is largely determined by its grammatical structures. Thus, poetry, that dispenses with regular metre should, according to Roger Mitchell, be scanned grammatically: "[I]n most modern verse, the description and definition of rhythms becomes impossible unless we take grammar into consideration" (Mitchell 1970: 3). However, in practice, Mitchell's scansion is also determined by the way in which the patterns of grammar are realized in an actual recitation, as is evident from the caesural component relevant to grammatical grouping. There are four degrees of caesura, or pause, extending from "[a] minimal juncture forced by unexpected punctuation or line ending between two syllables or words that would ordinarily be joined or separated only by a transitional juncture" to "[f]ull stop, or whatever, in correct punctuation, could take a period" (1970: 18). Each caesura creates a grammatical group, which is then further identified as periodic, clausal, subclausal 1 and 2, phrasal, and subphrasal. Although groups and caesuras are to some extent interdependent and, therefore, mutually predictable, Mitchell assigns priority to the caesura in that he concedes to rhetorical emphasis the possibility of either creating a gratuitous subphrasal break, or running over grammatical boundaries where one might as well pause. This performative arbitrariness in identifying groups "through the pauses which sensible reading forces upon us" (11), together with a deliberate neglect of stress patterns,[147] qualifies the otherwise interesting results obtained by Mitchell's system of grammatical scansion. While caesural phrasing certainly represents a useful complementary tool for the metro-rhythmic analysis of traditional poetry, the rhythms of free verse are only insufficiently explained by grammatical groups and emphatic pauses.

The examination of poetic rhythm calls for a more comprehensive linguistic approach, such as the one proposed by David Crystal in his chapter "Intonation and metrical theory" (1975: 105-124). He makes a clear distinction between the metrical abstraction and its verbal actualization, before defining metre "as the hierarchic system of continuous recurrent non-segmental phonological equivalences which

[147] Mitchell (1970: 19) writes:

> It is suggested that [the size of the groups be indicated] by syllable count rather than by stress count because of the tendency [....] among those who discuss the group as a phenomenon of poetic rhythm to revert to artificial groups similar to the foot based essentially on a stress prosody.

constitute the organizing principle of a poetic text" (107). The general appropriateness in English of a metrical description based on the syllable and on stress is called into question, especially, since its application to free verse seems to be wholly inadequate. "On what grounds, other than tradition," Crystal (110) asks, "has stress been singled out from the other phonological features of verse and been identified with metre?" We would answer that stress is the most conspicuous rhythmic feature in English poetry because of its recurrence at relatively short and perceptually isochronous intervals; yet, David Crystal regards the assumption of accentual predominance as unproven and axiomatic, and he advocates "an alternative approach, in which intonation is considered a constitutive factor in English metre" (111). But what is intonation? Crystal characterizes it as a complex notion based on pitch movement, whose various contrastive features combine into different intonational patterns. These features, however, are not contrasted binarily but displayed on a variable scale of featured shades. Such a concept of graded contrastivity in intonation "permits us to recognize that different non-segmental features make a varying contribution to the metrical identity of a text: it does not force us to assume that all intonational features, say, are equally important from the metrical point of view" (113). Thus, some features which are irrelevant to the establishment of a poetic metre will still be significant in the performance of a poem. And, here, intonation often assumes the role of semantic disambiguator.

Regarding the way in which the metrically relevant features of intonation may combine to represent the prosodic structure of a poem, Crystal suggests that a set of criteria should be developed for establishing degrees of equivalence between the various lineal intonation contours. These equivalences reveal themselves in different ways:

> [A]t any given level of abstraction, we may talk in particular in terms of length (e.g. number of tone-units, or of tonic syllables, or of non-tonic pitch prominences) or structure (the distribution of non-segmental contrastivity within any one unit, e.g. the structure of the tone-unit, or of the head of the tone-unit). Total equivalence would occur if lines were isomorphic in respect of all non-segmental features operating at all levels in the hierarchy - a state of affairs unlikely to occur unless there were considerable grammatical and lexical similarities also. And what this suggests, of course, is that equivalence is not an all-or-none thing, but rather a scale, running from the theoretical maximum just indicated to the theoretical minimum of non-isomorphism at any level. (Crystal 1975: 122-123)

Thus, two free verse lines would be prosodically compared not only with regard to their overall pitch movement, but also with regard to the intonational features by which such a pitch movement is sustained. Although this prosodic system is certainly remarkable for its general inclusiveness, there still remain doubts as to its practical utility. Apart from the idiosyncratic vagueness of an intonation contour, which is likely to persist despite linguistic attempts to substantiate the choice of a particular pitch movement, Crystal's approach fails to do justice to the rhythmic primacy of stress patterns in that it postulates the predominance of larger intonational structures. What is more, the general focus, even in free verse, on a *linear* prosodic contour obfuscates the important role played by the phonological phrase in assessing the

effect of poetic rhythm. In spite of these drawbacks, intonation represents an intriguing metrical quantity, as it is inevitably linked up with the accentual patterns of a poem. A prosodist's intonational practice will be examined, below, in our discussion of Alan Holder's book, *Rethinking Metre* (1995).

3.5. Phrasal approaches

Intonation comes into play also in Ruth Mary Weeks' "Phrasal Prosody" (1921). She distinguishes between syllabic stress and phrasal stress, and claims that either can be made "the pattern basis of a prosody" (12). Phrasal stress, or emphasis, lends itself to the composition of rhythmically flexible poems, and it is through such poetry that "the present-day [i.e. 1921] author of free verse strives to free his inspiration from the Procrustean bed of classic meters" (ibid.). With these preliminaries, Weeks turns to the work of Walt Whitman and examines some of his poems in terms of phonological phrasing and intraphrasal pitch movement. She acknowledges the perceptual need for a rhythmic unit below the levels of stanza and line, and relies on some implicit idea of performative euphony in subdividing Whitman's verbal strings into phonological phrases. In practice, this means that phrasal boundaries coincide with syntactic junctures. While the actual phrasings are generally rather fortunate, the intonational account given of their inner structure must be considered altogether unsatisfactory. Take, for example, Whitman's poem, "Whispers of Heavenly Death". Here, Ruth Weeks explains that "[e]very phrase in stanza one glides from a high to a low pitch," and "[i]n every phrase the emphasis comes toward the beginning" (17). Such statements must be regarded as inadmissible generalizations of the actual intonation in each phonological phrase. A more detailed analysis of intraphrasal patterns might have yielded valuable insights into the rhythms of Whitman's poetry.

The most comprehensive approach to free verse rhythm - and, indeed, to rhythm in all English verse - is provided by Richard D. Cureton (1992). As his theory of rhythmic phrasing has already been introduced and critically discussed in the first chapter, it seems now appropriate to demonstrate with an example how a multi-level analysis of free verse rhythm may be put into practice. Yet, rather than reproducing one of the rhythmic interpretations by which Cureton himself exemplifies his theoretical concepts of metre, grouping, and prolongation, we will apply his theory of rhythmic phrasing to a poem of our own choice, "Unter die Haut" by Paul Celan.[148] Cureton's system of principles, it is true, makes no claims beyond its applicability to English verse, but, German being very similar to English in respect of rhythmic quality, our proposed applicational extension should not affect the validity of the method. Here is, then, the poetic text to be analysed:

> Unter die Haut meiner Hände genäht:
> dein mit Händen
> getrösteter Name.
>
> Wenn ich den Klumpen Luft
> knete, unsere Nahrung,
> säuert ihn der
> Buchstabenschimmer aus

[148] The same text will be analysed in Chapter 4 with the metrical tools supplied by our own theory.

der wahnwitzig-offenen
Pore.

Before starting our investigations into the rhythmic structure of Celan's poem, we should summarize the basic assumptions of Cureton's theory. Rhythm is conceived as a cognitive hierarchy involving the grouping of all textual elements after their relative prominence on different levels. Although this process is governed by a long list of grouping well-formedness rules (GWFRs) and grouping preference rules (GPRs), there still remains plenty of room for individual phrasing alternatives.

We present the hierarchical rhythms of "Unter die Haut" in a diagrammatic form which can easily be reproduced on a word-processor or type-writer. With the exception of syllabic marks (>) and grouping symbols (# and @), all other notational features agree with those used by Richard Cureton. Here is the explanatory key:

(1) *Dots* represent the metre of the poem; the projection of the metrical impetus depends on the length of the dotted line - the longer the line of dots, the farther the projective scope of metre.

(2) The syllabic elements underlying the basic grouping structure at level 1 are marked by >.

(3) Vertical chains of either # or @ run parallel to the syllabic string they group at a particular level of grouping; they do *not* differentiate between different *types* of groups, but merely serve as an optical means of keeping adjacent groups apart.

(4) Letters *s* and *w* refer to the grouping peak (s) and its subordinate elements (w), respectively.

(5) Letters *a*, *r*, and *e* denote the prolongational concepts of anticipation, arrival/ departure[149], and extension.

(6) The symbols *x* and = specify the quality of the prolongational movement as either progressional ("presenting some strikingly new experience" (Cureton 1992: 148)) or equative ("anticipational and extensional movement that does not significantly move" (147)).

Paul Celan: "Unter die Haut"

	***level*:**		1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8
Un	. . .	>	s	#	wa	#		#		#		#				#	
ter		>	w	#		#		#		#		#				#	
die		>	w	@		#		#		#		#				#	
Haut	.	>	s	@	sxr	#	wa	#		#		#				#	
mei		>	w	#				#		#		#				#	
ner		>	w	#				#		#		#				#	
Hän	. .	>	s	#			sxr	#	wa	#		#				#	
de		>	w	#				#		#		#				#	
ge		>	w	@						#		#				#	
näht:	.	>	s	@					sxr	#	wa	#				#	
dein	. . .	>					wa	@				#				#	
mit		>	w	#		@		@				#				#	
Hän	.	>	s	#	wa	@		@				#				#	
den		>	w	#		@		@				#				#	

[149] A departure can be defined as an arrival that is not preceded by an anticipational phrase.

ge		>	w	@		@		@			#				#	
trö	. .	>	s	@	sxr	@	wxa	@			#				#	
ste		>	w	@		@		@			#				#	
ter		>	w	@		@		@			#				#	
Na	.	>	s	#			sxr	@		sxr	#			sr	#	
me.		>	w	#				@			#				#	
															#	
Wenn	. . .	>	s	@			wa	#			@		#		#	
ich		>	w	@				#			@		#		#	
den		>	w	#		#		#			@		#		#	
Klum	.	>	s	#	wa	#		#			@		#		#	
pen		>	w	#		#		#			@		#		#	
Luft	. .	>			sxr	#	sxr	#		sr	@	wa	#		#	
kne	.	>	s	@			wxe	#			@		#		#	
te,		>	w	@				#			@		#		#	
un	. .	>	s	#	wa	@					@		#		#	
se		>	w	#		@					@		#		#	
re		>	w	#		@					@		#		#	
Nah	.	>	s	@	sxr	@				w=e	@		#		#	
rung,		>	w	@		@					@		#		#	
säu	. . .	>	s	#	sr	#				wa	#		#		#	
ert		>	w	#		#					#		#		#	
ihn	.	>			wxe	#					#		#		#	
der		>	w	@		@			@		#		#		#	
Buch	. .	>	s	@	sr	@		sr	@	sxr	#	sxr	#	wxe	#	
sta		>	w	@		@			@		#		#		#	
ben		>	w	@		@			@		#		#		#	
schim	.	>	s	#	wxe	@			@		#		#		#	
mer		>	w	#		@			@		#		#		#	
aus	. . .	>					wa	@	@		#		#		#	
der		>			wa	#		@	@		#		#		#	
wahn	.	>	s	@	wxa	#		@	@		#		#		#	
wit		>	w	@		#		@	@		#		#		#	
zig-		>	w	@		#		@	@		#		#		#	
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Po	.	>	s	@	sxr	#	sxr	@	wxe	@		#		#		#	
re.		>	w	@		#		@		@		#		#		#	
	***level*:**		1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8

Note that the peak of a group (*s*) is always taken as the nodal point where the constituents of that group meet, and whence a link is provided with the grouping structure on the next higher level. Thus, if we follow up each syllabic *s*-position horizontally to where it represents one of the weak components of a group, we can immediately assess the relative weight of each strong syllable. A brief comment will give further explanations.

The rhythmic structure of Paul Celan's poem can be described in terms of a bottom-up process whereby small units are gathered into groups, and groups into larger groups, until eventually the text as a whole forms one all-inclusive group. These hierarchical phrasings are not directly involved in the establishment of a metre, since the shape of a metrical line is primarily determined by its ability to continue

unchanged throughout the poem. In "Unter die Haut", we distinguish five *metrical* lines:

(1) Unter die Haut meiner Hände genäht
(2) dein mit Händen getrösteter Name
(3) Wenn ich den Klumpen Luft knete (unsere Nahrung)
(4) säuert ihn der Buchstabenschimmer
(5) aus der wahnwitzig-offenen Pore.

Here, the option of a dominant four-beat measure depends for accentual compatibility not only on different levels of grouping, but even on syntactic structures that run counter to a rhythmic patterning based on GPR 1 (information). This is evident in the penultimate metrical line, "säuert ihn der Buchstabenschimmer", where the continuity of the metre is not warranted by the grouping structure: verb and object ("säuert ihn") join the subject's principal noun phrase ("der Buchstabenschimmer") at level 6 only *after* it has been grouped at level 5 with its phrasal postmodifier ("aus der wahnwitzig-offenen Pore"). Furthermore, it is interesting to observe how the general measure is suspended at the end of the third metrical line by an additional two-beat phrase ("unsere Nahrung") whose relatively flat metre suggests its subordination to the preceding pattern. It is, of course, no accident that this metrical appendix coincides with a syntactic apposition.

The grouping structure of Celan's poem reveals a carefully prepared culmination of the semantic movement at the end of the first stanza. Following up the horizontal thrust of each low-level peak, we notice that, until the end of line 1, the size of groups between levels 2 and 5 increases through a steady, unidirectional process of accumulation in which grouping peaks come last. The structuring of the complex noun phrase in lines 2 and 3 repeats this rising movement above the second level, yet, without progressing in the same straightforward accumulative manner. At level 6, too, the grouping pattern continues to be rising. Its peak, and thus the entire stanza, pivots on the word "Name", which then even emerges as the focal point of the whole poem. This means, however, that what the strong first half (lines 1 through 3) features as its structural characteristic, namely, rising groups, is inverted in the poem's overall movement. The weaker second half (lines 4 through 9) is subdivided into groups of a less uniform pattern: conceived as one group at level 7, this stanza is characterized by a rising movement, whereas, on level 6, the first of its two groups is falling, the second rising. At lower levels, we also come across *waved* groups with a medial peak. The dynamics that operate between grouping structures are described prolongationally. In Paul Celan's poem, the strong sense of closure conveyed by a group-final arrival in each stanza is counterbalanced by the relative openness of the extensional movement that terminates the text in its entirety: relational uncertainty checks any hopes of interpretative clarity. Conclusively, we can say that the above findings yield very useful insights into the cognitive structure of the poem. However, since Cureton's theory of phrasing neglects, even at the level of metre, the rhythmic importance of accentual pattern gestalt, and since we do not share Cureton's global concept of *rhythm* as hierarchical grouping, our recommendation of his challengingly comprehensive approach is not for a *rhythmic* but a *structural* analysis of English and German (free) verse.

Derek Attridge (1995) slightly improves on Cureton's pioneering work by reducing it to its absolute fundamentals and, thus, rendering rhythmic phrasing a more accessible and more practicable tool in poetic analysis. His abridged version "aims at nothing more than introducing a simple approach to one aspect of phrasing" (Attridge

1995: 182), namely, prolongation. Four types of phrasal movement are being distinguished: anticipation, arrival, extension, and statement. The latter corresponds to Cureton's notion of departure, that is, arrival without anticipation. Attridge demonstrates the usefulness of rhythmic phrasing with several examples, including one free verse poem. While his phrasal analysis agrees with Cureton's grouping procedures at higher levels, his metro-rhythmic approach to the stress structures in free verse differs significantly from Cureton's. Rather than employing dot-grid measures, Attridge distinguishes between a metrical and rhythmic analysis below the level of phrasing. As long as free verse poetry alludes to traditional metres, the analysis will be metrical; but when these allusive patterns cannot be established, the stress structures require a rhythmic analysis. Attridge explains:

> There is no absolute division between the working (or the analysis) of meter and of rhythm - obviously, metrical patterning, when it occurs, is a central element in the rhythm of a poem. But in free verse poems which do not evoke the movements of meter, part of the dynamic texture of the poetry comes from the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables. (1995: 177)

Metre in free verse emerges in the occasional regularity of linguistic stress patterns. Although these linguistic stress patterns, as Derek Attridge vaguely implies, belong in their rhythmic concreteness to a more immediate level of analysis than the metrical structures in their abstraction, the difference in free verse between the two analytical modes remains slight. For "[t]he common metrical variations such as demotion, promotion, and inversion can be felt as such only when a sufficiently strong metrical expectation has been set up, and this happens very seldom in free verse" (1995: 175). Yet, although the metrical impetus is certainly less marked in free verse than in traditional poetry, one must take into consideration the fact that metrical expectation is not only determined by a regular recurrence of syllabic prominences, but also by the reader's willingness and ability to experience temporal regularity even in patterns of varying stress distribution. Attridge relies for the establishment of a metre too much on lexical stress; he fails to see that the realization of lexical stress in a recitation need not necessarily be supported by an underlying metrical beat. Moreover, he restricts metrical analysis to *linear* stress patterns; the often far more interesting *phrasal* stress patterns of free verse are only rhythmically examined with regard to their distribution of lexically prominent syllables. From our point of view, the results of such an examination will not be particularly illuminating unless the phrasal subdivision yields accentually comparable structures. However, by way of résumé, we would like to emphasize that the drawbacks of Attridge's metro-rhythmic approach are outweighed by the very useful structural insights of his phrasal analysis.

Finally, in our discussion of phrasal approaches to free verse rhythm, we will review Alan Holder's recent book, *Rethinking Meter* (1995). Unlike Cureton and Attridge, who conceive of rhythmic phrasing as a process based on cognitive hierarchical structuring, Holder does not distinguish between different levels in the phrasal segmentation of a poem. A phrase is a phonological unit whose terminus is usually marked by a pause, and whose metro-rhythmic characteristics are imparted by its stress pattern. In the analysis of a poetic text, the stress patterns of adjoining phrases are compared with regard to their structural similarity or dissimilarity. Additionally, the line functions as a rhythmically significant unit because its visual

form calls for an auditory expression in performance. As Holder aptly remarks, "[p]ausing at the end of a line should not be counted on to 'make' the line, but should, ideally, acknowledge that it has in some sense made itself" (149). And, furthermore, the analysis of lineo-phrasal stress structures may be complemented by an investigation of intonational pitch movements. So far, then, the above outline of Holder's multi-way approach to rhythm in traditional poetry and free verse looks fairly promising as it avoids methodological one-sidedness. A more detailed critical examination will reveal how far this comprehensive analytical design yields insightful results.

Holder begins by vehemently criticizing conventional metrists for their often unreflective acceptance of prosodic categories. The tenor of this criticism can be inferred from the tone and manner in which he presents the reader with a long list of questions about metre. Here is a short sample:

> What is the function of meter? Does it serve to excite us, producing a kind of hyperattentiveness, or does it work to lull or hypnotize us? Is it meter's principal job to set up a recurring pattern that pleases an intrinsic human appetite for repetition, or is it designed to create such a pattern simply in order to deviate from it in an expressive manner? Or, since having things both ways is a favorite sport of metrists, should meter be seen as doing both? (24)

Yet, Holder not only ridicules traditional metrics, he also rightly puts his finger on certain weaknesses in metrical reasoning, such as the arbitrariness of the linear subdivision into feet. That this kind of fault-finding is occasionally overdone can be seen in the altogether unjustified casuistic carping at the relative stress principle, which is said to be incompatible with the sequences of two unstressed syllables in dactyls and anapaests (see Holder 1995: 25-26). However, in general, the attack against metrical abstraction tends to be cogent and attractive because of its reliance on a straightforward common-sense argumentation. Only, when it comes to putting forward his own metrical principles, do Holder's explanations betray something of their intrinsic vulnerability. Interestingly, both argumentative strength and applicational weakness derive from the same key assumption, namely, that metre should be based on poetic performance. The question is, however, to what extent a metrical pattern needs to be recognized in verbal utterance.

Holder makes it perfectly clear that to him there is no metre but in the accentual patterns of a poetic recitation. He states that

> the words of any poem should be read in such a manner as to receive their lexical stress, or only such modification of that stress as is required by the rules of English phonology. The distortion or alteration of normal stress patterns that some metrists have favored, because such is "called for" by the meter, undermines the connection of poetry to ordinary spoken language. (129)

This connection, however, does not mean identity; for "[t]he words of poetry [....] are or should be spoken with greater care and at a slower pace than the words of our daily speech" (ibid.). The actual rendering of a poem is largely a matter of preferring one particular performative style to others. Although the textual basis provides the cues

for its acoustic realization, it does not determine just one possibility of performance. Alan Holder is aware of some inevitable idiosyncrasy, here; but at the same time he clings to the performative significance of linguistic facts. Thus, he maintains, for instance, that "pauses get built into poetry because they are built into our articulation of words in general. This is not a matter of individual performance, though no doubt one performance might create a particular pause where another might not. This is a matter of linguistics" (152). In other words (to resolve the outright contradiction), pausing is a matter of linguistics as well as of individual performance. Although Holder concedes that "there might well be differences in rendering from reader to reader" (29), he remains convinced that only the analysis of a performance can tell us something about poetic rhythm.

Holder argues that for a rhythmic response to poetry we rely on its acoustic realization: "[I]n performing the poem, what we say is what we get, and *all* that we get. A syllable that is stressed is heard as stressed; it is not heard simultaneously as stressed and unstressed" (52). This certainly holds true for the listener; it need not apply to the performer. For just as it is possible to read a poem to the beat of a metronome, it is also possible to read it with the ideal of a perceptually isochronous metre in the back of one's mind. However, the fact that this mode of delivery is not generally employed in a poetic recitation lends some strength to Holder's argument. Even a metrist might sometimes abandon his or her theoretical concept in the actual performance of a poem, and pay attention only to the expression of meaning. A metrical theory should ideally provide both clear insights into the rhythmic potential of a poetic text and a practical tool for their performative application. While the first of these two functions requires a certain degree of abstraction, the second presupposes the reader's willingness and ability to sense a metrical pulse that need not always coincide with the actual stress patterns. Alan Holder's performance-based concept of metre is obviously designed to suit those readers of verse who do not derive rhythmic pleasure from the tension between an abstract metrical scheme and its variable linguistic realizations.

Rethinking Meter is the appropriate title of a book that, by challenging the basic principles of conventional metrics, illustrates the fundamental dichotomy in metro-rhythmic perception between readers who need to obtain a sense of regularity from the linguistic structures of a poem in order to be rhythmically satisfied, and readers who content themselves with any natural stress pattern whether regular or irregular. Holder belongs to the second class of readers. "I have no interest in regularizing the line" (90), he writes of the opening line of Shakespeare's Sonnet 30, and this statement may as well be considered generally applicable. Thus, the singular rhythmic effect of four-beat verse in the short ballad measure (where four-stress lines alternate with three-stress lines) is either non-existent or just remains unexplained, as the necessity of a compensatory silent beat ("that paradoxical (and [....] nonsensical) entity" (217)) in the three-stress line seems to Holder merely "a waste of analytic energy" (66). Rhythmic regularization, however, is an intrinsic phonological principle of the English language, and as such should be allowed some significance in the metro-rhythmic perception of poetry. But although Holder is aware of the possibility of an intralexical stress shift triggered by the context to avoid the clash of two

adjacent stresses,[150] he does not recognize the implications of this rhythm rule for the establishment of a poetic metre.

Given such a weak desire for rhythmic stringency, we need not be surprised that Holder sketches a metrical concept by which the line of an iambic pentameter is analysed as if it was free verse. In this concept, metre "will not be given the power to distort the ordinary stress patterns of our language, and it will not be the lord of the line" (157). It will simply be "a description of poetic practice" (174). Accordingly, the iambic pentameter is defined not by an abstract paradigm of five iambic feet, but by the approximate outline of its actualizations. However, Holder's loose characterization of this metre - generally decasyllabic, only sometimes nine or eleven syllables per line, of which four or five are stressed intermittently - still permits deviations from the metrical norm, inasmuch as his metrication is based on an uncompromisingly idiosyncratic reading. Take, for example, the analysis of Shakespeare's Sonnet 116: here, four lines out of fourteen do not comply with the normative number of four or five stresses per line. Moreover, the flexibility of the metrical template renders impossible some insights into compositional techniques which only a conventional view of iambic pentameter can explain. Thus, every syntactic inversion in Shakespeare's poem is at least partly motivated by the rigidity of xXxXxXxXxX as the underlying alternation of metrical non-stress and metrical stress. Holder's metro-rhythmic idiosyncrasy eventually culminates, as he wilfully plays off one normative criterion against another by assuming in line 6 ("That looks on tempests and is never shaken") that "'never' undergoes a standard contraction to a one-syllable word in order to preserve a ten-syllable line" (180). However, rather than keeping up the metre's decasyllabicity, one should emphasize the importance of avoiding accentual clashes and, accordingly, give priority to stress intervals.

Unlike iambic pentameter, where phrasalism must also account for linear metrical stress patterns, free verse lines and phrases do not normally feature linguistic structures of accentual regularity. As Holder writes by way of prologue to his analyses of Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro" and Sylvia Plath's "Ariel", "here there will be no considerations of meter, even of the loosened sort [....]. But [....] there *will* be a focus on the sonic structure of a poem's individual lines, broken up, where appropriate, into phrases" (182). The ensuing discussions, then, are more or less satisfactory, since free verse lacks a regular metre, which would interfere with the poem's linguistic stress patterns. The peculiarity inherent in a performance-based analysis of the phrasal structures is, therefore, comparatively inconspicuous. In his interpretations of the above-mentioned free verse texts, Holder employs phrasalist techniques not so much in order to account for the poems' rhythmic effects, but to explain, wherever possible, the phonological features of a phrase with respect to their semantic significance. While such an attempt certainly deserves to be appreciated for its comprehensiveness, the analysis of poetic rhythm could be expected to play a more prominent part in the discussion of free verse prosody.

Since the voicing of poetry is regarded as the basis of prosodic interpretation, it seems desirable that the poetic actualization be more fully described in terms of intonation patterns. To this purpose, Alan Holder draws upon Dwight Bolinger's book, *Intonation and its Parts: Melody in Spoken English* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1986), for a set of three basic profiles characterizing the local pitch

[150] Holder (1995: 261) gives the example of "thirteen", which in predicative use receives word-final stress (e.g. "she is thirteen"), whereas the attributive use in phrases such as "thirteen women" demands word-initial stress.

movements of words or phrases. In combination, these profiles form contours, whose varying pitch levels are directly reflected in the typography of a line's syllables. What is, then, the significance of an intonational shape compared to that of accentual patterns? Holder writes:

> *Pitch* analysis reveals the essential structure of the whole of the line, the skeleton of its gestalt for which no a priori model need be invoked. *Stress* analysis, without, in my version of it, being predisposed to demonstrating the presence of a particular metrical paradigm, proceeds mainly on a word-by-word basis, using lexical stress as a frame of reference in making its determinations, in addition to weighing the semantic importance of each word. It will flesh out the linear skeleton, so to speak, pointing to a layer of lesser saliences than those that will dominate the intonational analysis. (233)

In other words, while the examination of stress patterns will produce a fairly refined structuring of the phrase or verse line, the examination of pitch movement will supply the overarching frame that gives a phonological direction to the accentual structures of a poem. However, Holder's examples show that the results obtained by analysing both stress patterns and intonation contour are to a great extent overlapping. This is not surprising; for we can say that, although the intonational contour of a line may, in its extensional movement, ignore the details of accentual patterns, pitch is closely bound up with the notion of stress in the sense that a high pitch will inevitably signify syllabic prominence. Thus, when Holder, analysing the profiles in line 2 of Sylvia Plath's "Ariel" ("Then the substanceless blue"), starts off with a high-pitched tone on the first word ("Then") followed by a low pitch on the second ("the"), he obviously describes a performative reading that is different from that in which he, analysing the accentual pattern of the same line, assigns stresses only to syllables 3 ("sub") and 6 ("blue"), leaving the first word ("Then") unstressed. But variant readings are, of course, legitimate. What ultimately distinguishes a pitch analysis from a stress analysis is its emphasis on the tonal *movement* from one pitch level to another. This dynamism permits a profounder statement about the semantic significance of prosodic patterns than does the relatively static structure obtained by stress analysis.

The interpretative advantages of intonational data are, however, gained at the expense of analytical disambiguity, because pitch movement represents a highly variable and, therefore, idiosyncratic feature of poetic performance. Alan Holder is aware of this objection, but he nevertheless argues:

> The intonational contours of speech might be difficult to describe, but are not impossibly so. Nor does each person employ a repertory of such contours entirely peculiar to himself or herself. If this *were* the case we should hardly be able to communicate with each other. (201)

Based as it is on spoken language, this argument fails to consider the general subordination in poetry of the communicative function to the poetic. Any linguistic element in the performance of a poem - whether intonation contour or accentual pattern - is only partially subject to communicative exigencies because the poetic elevation of language marginalizes the importance of clear communication and multiplies the possibilities of performative realization. To what extent the recitation of

a poetic text may deviate from the supposed norm of a commonly accepted delivery style depends more on the reader's predisposition than on linguistic cues within the poem. Holder regards this delivery norm as "a performance likely to be rendered by many readers" (229). How far the readers of his book would want to follow him in this argument remains doubtful. While it is certainly true - as Holder maintains, in an epilogue, against a deconstructivist silent-reading approach to verse - that the actual sounding of a poem must play a central role in the analysis of its prosodic features, such an analysis should not simply describe a particular recitation but rely on performance as a means by which we may establish and control a more generally valid, abstract paradigm of metre or intonation. Alan Holder essentially describes his own readings. This idiosyncrasy, while less conspicuous in his free verse analyses, renders the prosodic examination of iambic pentameter a failure despite the commendable inclusion of intralinear phrase patterns. Notwithstanding these obvious drawbacks, Holder's book should be perused by all those who have hitherto regarded conventional metrics as the one true prosodic approach to poetry. For *Rethinking Meter*, in its pointed opposition to the metrical tradition, does keep what its title promises: it makes its readers rethink their concepts of metre.

The above discussion has revealed the variety of approaches by which poets and critics alike try to understand and explain the rhythms of free verse. However, it is patent that any such attempt must needs neglect some rhythmic aspects while focusing on others, since not even the most inclusive theory can claim to capture all the nuances of our rhythmic response to poetic language. In order to assess the degree to which a critical examination of free verse rhythm may be regarded as successful, we must have a look at the appropriateness of its focus and argument. These two criteria are characterized by pairs of contrasting features. The *focus* of a study may be confined to free verse or take on board also conventional poetry; it may with precision zoom in on questions of rhythm or relate primarily to more general issues. For instance, poets such as Whitman, Lawrence, Pound, Eliot, Williams, and Olson, who have been foremost in the dissemination of free verse and its propagandistic proclamation, concentrate almost exclusively on metrically irregular poetry and tackle it from a personal point of view that stresses philosophical aspects rather than metro-rhythmic technique. Their eloquent remarks, however, do not clear up but mystify the role played by rhythm in free verse. Unlike the above poets, Richard Cureton is interested in a comprehensive investigation into poetic rhythm that allows him to include in the scope of his work both free verse and traditional verse. An approach which concentrates only on rhythm and only on free verse can be found, for example, in the prosodic analysis of Whitman's "Lilacs" by Rosemary Gates.

As regards the *argument* of a study, we distinguish between the relative explicitness or implicitness of a theoretical foundation, and between the practicability or impracticability of the proposed analytical method. The latter distinction also implies a sense of usefulness or uselessness, depending on the extent to which the practice of prosodic interpretation succeeds in convincing the reader of its appropriateness. Ruth Mary Weeks, for instance, largely dispenses with a theoretical justification for her phrasal analysis of Whitman's poetry, so that, as a consequence, her rhythmic interpretation is tainted with the flaw of idiosyncrasy. By contrast, David Crystal outlines a theoretical concept in favour of intonation as a metrically relevant feature, but refrains from putting it into practice. Conclusively, we can say that the critical approaches to rhythm in free verse are too diverse in their methods

and perspectives to fit into a straightforward evaluation scheme. Argumentative plausibility must be regarded as the only criterion which enables us to assess, albeit subjectively, the practical usefulness of a study, since without the support of a plausible argument the analytical process cannot be reconstructed. A critic who does not fully account for the theoretical implications of his or her investigations may, at best, come up with the description of an interesting performative reading. Yet, a metro-rhythmic analysis will only then yield generally valid insights into the linguistic patterns of free verse, if it is established on an argumentative basis that can accommodate the large number of structural varieties in metrically irregular poetry. The metrical theory expounded in the next chapter will furnish such an argumentative basis.

4. The metrical structure of free verse

4.1. The concept of a structural metre

Rhythm justifies metre because metre explains rhythm. But the straightforwardness of this mutual relationship between rhythm and metre should not mislead us with regard to the complexity of the process of establishing a poetic metre. For a poetic metre is dependent on poetic rhythm; and since rhythm is often elusive and therefore difficult to specify, we must not expect a metrical scheme to emerge unequivocally and with ease from the vagueness of our rhythmic intuition. In order to arrive, then, at a metrical specification, we need to be aware of all the components which, in a concerted way, contribute to our impression of a particular rhythm in a particular poem. Any rhythmic experience of poetry consists in an emotional response to the wave-like movements that characterize the linguistic features of a text. Usually, these wave-like movements are produced by varying degrees of syllabic prominence; but, occasionally, the larger lexical or syntactic units may constitute the basis of a pattern so penetratingly repetitive that they become rhythmically more important than the component parts of any small-scale pattern whose string of syllables is characterized by a comparatively irregular stress distribution. Although a complex and, therefore, unpredictable stress structure encourages the direct metrical use of lexical or syntactic patterns, we must not disregard the fact that even the rhythms of free verse are mostly produced by accentual undulations rather than by lexical or syntactic arrangements.

The textual ubiquity of stress patterns is only one reason for their predominant metro-rhythmical significance: they also have the advantage of utilizing a fairly definite and intrinsically contrastive structure in order to produce rhythm; and, what is more, they provide rhythmic alternation at the perceptually ideal level of frequency. As opposed to this, a lexical or syntactic pattern would have to go a long way towards artificiality before evoking a rhythmic response. Whitman's long lists of lexically equivalent words, and syntactically equal or similar clauses and phrases (the rhythmic effectiveness of which is greatly enhanced by lineation and, sometimes, anaphora) are certainly the best example of a syntactic metre. However, the predominance of a syntactic metre need not necessarily exclude the possibility of a locally operating and, therefore, less comprehensive structural metre based on stress alternation.[151] Thus, it is possible that, in a syntactically regular poem, we may experience two different rhythmic structures which complement each other. Yet, we should bear in mind that the structure of syntax can never boast the rhythmic precision of an alternating stress pattern, because the former may not be rhythmized with temporal exactitude unless it is supported by the structure of an underlying accentual metre. In this case, we experience the regular rhythm of a stress pattern with an increased intensity of perception, whereas the actual intensifier, syntax, is altogether absorbed by the rhythmic primacy of syllabic prominence.

The fact that syntax can either be immediately responsible for the establishment of a metre or function merely as a metrical intensifier, reveals the importance of a distinction between primary and secondary metro-rhythmical features. We will call those linguistic characteristics of a poem which display in their pattern the rhythm we feel, and suggest in their structure the metre we understand, the *primary metro-*

[151] Henceforth, I will use the term "structural metre" in order to refer to that kind of stress metre which can be applied to free verse.

rhythmical features of the poem; and we will call those characteristics which have a constitutive influence - either supportive or detrimental - on the establishment of a metre without being metrical themselves, the *secondary metro-rhythmical features* of the poem. By way of illustration, let us first consider the rather exceptional case of a dominant syntactic metre. It has already been pointed out that, if syntax is recognized as the prevailing metrical basis of a poem, the stress patterns can at best have a complementary metrical function and do not otherwise interfere with the syntactic structure. Syntax, it is true, may be ambiguous and depend for a disambiguating clarification on the semantic context; but, on the whole, the formation of sentence structures is largely independent of linguistic assistance other than syntactic, because the patterns of syntax are in most cases unequivocally identified. Lacking, in their acoustic presence, clearly contrastive features, the grammatical sentence structures do not lend themselves naturally to rhythmical perception; it is only when some conspicuous phrasal repetition makes us aware of a metrical possibility which usually remains untried, that we experience the rhythm of syntax all the more for its unexpectedness.

Unlike the stable structures of syntax, to which metre resorts only for want of a rhythmically more rewarding stress pattern, the unstable structures of syllabic prominence in free verse require careful support from all sorts of contextual correlation. Thus, if we agree that there is rhythm in free verse, and if we set out to describe this rhythm in terms of a metre which is based on the alternation of syllabic stress, we will have to find a means not only of establishing a stress pattern that deserves to be rhythmically recognized, but also of creating a fairly consistent concept of metre that can be sustained against all possibilities of metrical subversion. Once we believe that we have chanced on a metre which satisfies our desire for the rhythmic understanding of a certain phrase or line, we may discover that another metrical alternative would, in some respects, be preferable to our initial choice. However, as soon as we switch again to our former position and view the matter in the light of our former perspective, we might well come to favour once again our first rhythmic explanation. The remedy for such a metrical predicament will have to be sought in a comparative specification of the secondary metro-rhythmical features as they confirm or refute the respective alternatives of metrical interpretation. In order for us to be able to assess the impact of the various secondary features upon our rhythmic response to any given phrase or line of a free verse poem, we must endeavour to control the process of rhythmic perception by a self-awareness that reflects the extent to which each metrically relevant feature contributes to the establishment of a metre. We may try to classify the various influences according to a hierarchical order, but it will be seen that any attempt to give strict priority to some aspects of metrical formation is doomed to fail because of their distinct relativity. The effect of each secondary metro-rhythmical feature hinges on the effects of all other secondary metro-rhythmical features. Thus, metre in free verse emerges from contextual interrelation, and the primary feature of a structural metre, syllabic prominence, is generated only by the interplay of all secondary features.

In order to explain the rhythms of free verse by means of a structural metre, we cannot so much rely on the achievements of traditional metrics but have to go back to the most fundamental potential of rhythm in language.[152] For the units that are metrically relevant in a traditional poem - such as stanza, couplet, line, and half-line - either do not exist in free verse, or are metrically insufficient. The line, for example,

[152] In the context of this thesis, “language” implies English and German.

can only then claim to be indispensable to the establishment of a metre, if it demonstrates throughout a whole poem, or at least a substantial part of it, the metrical delimitation of rhythmically effective stress patterns. A free verse line generally fails to meet this condition: the number of syllables per line is not confined to any specified range, and the intralinear structure may feature all kinds of accentual distribution. A metrically regular poem, on the other hand, employs linear stress structures to the most effective rhythmic ends. It is from these effects of the regular rhythms of traditional poetry that we can learn something about the way in which the various characteristics of rhythmic patterns co-operate to achieve a particular result. The criteria to be obtained from an investigation of the rhythmic effects in metrically regular poetry will help to confirm our intuitive impressions of some of the rhythms in free verse. However, it is patent that the more complex rhythmical structures in metrically irregular poetry require a close examination of rhythm beyond the metrical limitations of traditional verse. No less elementary a phenomenon than language itself can - in its vast structural variety - serve as the source from which free verse quenches its thirst for rhythmic diversity. The explanation of rhythm in metrically irregular verse is no longer dependent on the distinct recognition of a single metrical norm to which all the lines of a poem approximate more or less; but it relies on relational patterns in which each unit constitutes a metrical norm for its adjacent units. The continuity of a structural metre thus consists in its constant variation.

In the previous statement, we have already anticipated what will be the result of complex metro-rhythmical considerations. Still, we need to ask: what are the criteria for the establishment of a structural metre, and how do they interact so as to make rhythmic explanation possible? When we eventually present a pattern which we claim to be explanatory of the rhythm in a free verse poem, is not the metrical pattern but a simple description of a possible poetic performance? These are only some questions which a theory of metre in free verse is bound to answer. It will undoubtedly be one of the major tasks of this work to dispel the understandable scepticism of many metrists towards the seemingly oxymoronic idea of a free verse metre,[153] and to convince them of the usefulness of a metrical tool for the analytical disassembly of irregular stress patterns. A structural metre can only challenge unmetrical approaches to free verse, if it succeeds in furnishing a profound insight into the nature of poetic rhythm. This means that we will have to discover *why* metrically irregular verse forms should be at all rhythmical, if - as we have seen in Chapter 1 - rhythm is characterized by regularity. The crucial question for the establishment of a structural metre is, therefore: what makes free verse patterns rhythmic?

Free verse, like all verbal text, consists of syllables.[154] One, two or more syllables make up a word. In English as well as in German, each word, in its lexical entity, has its own typical pattern of syllabic prominence,[155] within which adjacent syllables tend

[153] Jon Silkin (1997: 7), for example, writes: "Supposing metre to be formalized rhythm, it may be possible to say that while metrical lines of verse have both metre and rhythm, free verse either mixes in, or has no, metrical lines, and is rhythmic only."

[154] Poetry that does not consist of syllables cannot be said to be verse. See, for example, the concrete poems sketched by Bob Cobbing.

[155] A few English words - for instance, "controversy", "clavier", or the surname of the composer Henry Purcell - permit of more than one pattern of syllabic prominence. Such words, rare though they are, are metrically flexible and, therefore, metrophile, especially, if they occur in a free verse poem. In German, alternative lexical stress patterns are even rarer: there are some words which are stressed differently in Switzerland and Germany. They are nouns derived from French, such as "Balkon", or "Etui": while people in Switzerland would put the main stress on the first syllable, people in Germany

to differ in stress intensity. As a consequence of this relativity - and since accentual crescendos or decrescendos involving three or more syllables are not very common within the unit of the word[156] - the intralexical distribution of relatively weaker and stronger stresses inclines towards regularity. We may call this inclination, which is palpable in almost any verbal text, the rhythmic potential of the text. Metre exploits the tendency towards regularity in that it captures its implied destination and thereby attracts other stress patterns into the same direction. These possibilities of metrical self-generation and self-perpetuation are augmented by the fact that the accentual structures of a verse text are subject not only to lexical stress patterns, but also to certain aspects of syntax-governed syllabic prominence. The main accent of one word may be weakened in the immediate vicinity of another word whose accent is syntactically or semantically more important. Thus, a monosyllable, which in isolation is always stressed, will easily lose its accent in a syntactic context. It is on the grounds of such a complex relativity of both lexical and syntactic stress that the idea of a metre may prosper even in free verse.

Since poetic rhythm is both a temporal and a structural phenomenon, we depend for its metrical explanation on the distinct recognition of linguistic stress patterns within structurally identifiable units. While the syllabo-tonic metres of traditional verse make use of the line in order to create rhythmically equivalent segments of text, free verse generally rejects lineation as an artificial means of metro-rhythmic grouping. However, this is not to say that the free verse line is completely void of rhythmic significance - only that, in free verse, the effects of lineation are not sufficiently rhythmical for us to erect on their basis a metrical theory. For an explanation of free verse rhythms, we must draw upon the natural units of speech rhythm as they are present in the structures of syntax.[157] We hold that the rhythms of language unfold in the sequential mosaic of syntactic patterns rather than emerging from the hierarchical order of syntax. For example, a chain of relative clauses in which each member refers back to the previous member need not be rhythmically different from a similar chain of relative clauses in which each member refers back to one and the same main clause. In structural metre, the hierarchy of syntax is relevant only inasmuch as it may govern the rhythmic *significance* of a syntactic unit. Thus, the compelling patterns of a main clause are likely to be rhythmically more significant than the equally compelling patterns of a dependent non-restrictive relative clause; so that, while the rhythms remain the same, a high-level syntactic pattern would command more rhythmic attention than a low-level syntactic pattern.

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stress the last syllable. However, another French derivative, “Telefon”, seems to indicate a gradual preference among German speakers of German for word-initial stress, since only the entries in earlier dictionaries of German pronunciation render the term with word-final stress, whereas more recent dictionaries give, in addition to the end-stressed version, a pronunciation in which the first syllable bears the main stress of the word.

[156] There are, however, clear examples of trisyllabic stress gradation in certain compounds where the first part consists of a monosyllable: for instance, “forefathers” in English and its German cognate, “Vorväter”. We will see in our discussion of metrical stress patterns that such words are rather metrophobe as they do not fit easily into the accentual alternation of an ideal metre.

[157] We could also use prosodic structures in order to determine the metrical units of free verse. However, as syntax will definitely have to play a part in the establishment of a free verse metre, it would complicate the description unnecessarily to use expressions such as “comma” or “colon” in addition to the terminology of syntax. Moreover, the approximate equivalence in structural metrics of different syntactic components functioning as metrical units does not favour a terminological distinction between them. In our theory of a free verse metre, syntactic units are prosodic units.

However, the possible effects of a hierarchical relationship between adjacent metro-syntactic units eclipse in the light of the rhythmic force that emanates from metrical variation. For the essence of rhythm is change within regularity: a metrically unstressed syllable following a metrically stressed syllable produces change, which, in repetition, becomes regular. This rhythmic principle controls to a considerable extent the linguistic stress patterns within each metro-syntactic unit; it is, as it were, largely responsible for the metrical *shape* or *gestalt* of the unit. The cogent force of gestalt may occasionally become syntactically independent, and promote, for example, the line to a metrical unit. Yet, the rhythmic principle of change within regularity exerts an influence also beyond the boundaries of a metrical unit on the relationship between adjacent stress structures. We will, therefore, have to examine the various effects produced by different kinds of rhythmic correlation between different kinds of metrical shapes. And we will try to answer questions like the following: why are some variations of a metrical pattern rhythmically more powerful than others? Is it possible to define relative rhythmicity in terms of deviations from a metrical norm? And to what extent does it matter whether the metrical norm is rhythmically regular or irregular? Although the multitude of accentual claims for rhythmic recognition by various linguistic components is liable to blur our view of a distinct metrical grouping and patterning, we have reason to believe that the obstinate pursuit of a structural metre will yield the desired explanation of a free verse rhythm.

We can, then, distinguish between three kinds of secondary metro-rhythmical features, which interact simultaneously to determine the metrical units and their stress patterns. First, we need to deal with the possibilities of syllabic prominence within words and phrases. While the merely phonological determination of lexical and phrasal stress patterns leaves hardly any scope for optional variants, the impact of semantics opens up a chance for several alternative patterns to become metrically feasible. It is clear that, of these potentially practicable alternatives, some are phonologically more acceptable than others. Yet, since lexical and phrasal stress patterns are not the only criteria for our choice of a metre in free verse, a decision in favour of a particular phonological alternative will have to be postponed until further evidence has been procured from a careful investigation into the potentials of other metrically relevant features. Next, in order to identify a metrical unit within its boundaries, we must rely on syntactic structures (and lineation, if rhythmically effective). However, since the boundaries of syntax differ with respect to their rhythmic relevance - clause boundaries, for instance, are rhythmically more relevant than phrasal boundaries - we face, in this second step, again the difficulty of having to choose between several possible syntactic groupings. Of course, we would like to opt for the rhythmically more distinct units of syntax; yet, a final choice can be made only after we have come to terms with metrical gestalt as the third secondary metro-rhythmic feature. Metrical gestalt, or shape, is the most variable of the three components that contribute to the establishment of a structural metre. Since it is independent of linguistic constraints (if we assume that its theoretical possibilities exist prior to their metrical application), the shape of an ideal stress pattern must obey non-linguistic rules. These are to be found, as we have pointed out above, in the rhythmic principle of change within regularity. To generate a free verse metre on the basis of relative stress alternation is to combine the three components of lexico-phrasal stress patterns, syntactic grouping, and metrical shape into a satisfactory whole in which the structural aspirations of each component are fulfilled as far as the metrical concessions of each component would allow.

After this preliminary account of a theory which we consider to be explanatory of free verse rhythm and, therefore, to be metrical, we should not fail to maintain a critical attitude towards our proposal of a structural metre. Two important questions need to be answered. First of all, how do we account for the fact that free verse is essentially trying to oppose metrical order, and to foil even the natural tendency of linguistic stress alternation? And secondly, what can we expect of a theory in which variability seems to be almost the only constant? In reply to the first question, we should point out that our theory of a free verse metre depends to a large extent on the linguistic structures as they occur in the written prose of a language. These structures can be said to reflect the natural linguistic rhythms at the level of textual standardization. As long as a poem sticks to the grammatical rules of the language in which it is written, it will also comply with the natural rhythms of that language; but whenever a verse text deviates from grammar, the linguistic rhythms are likely to become confused since they are bereft of a more or less well-defined rhythmical basis. It is, therefore, to be expected that our theory of structural metre will yield more rewardingly insightful results if it is applied to linguistically unspectacular free verse than in the case of being implemented in the context of grammatical extravagance.

As for the second question, we can do not much more, at this stage in the development of our theory, than to acknowledge the challenge posed by the persistent inconstancy of metrical features. There can be no doubt that a theory of structural metre which is based on relativity must needs be almost as pliable as free verse itself. Yet, for our theory to become applicable and reconstructable, we will have to examine to what extent we might be able to explain or govern by preference rules both the internal processes within each secondary metrical component and the various possibilities of intercomponential relationships. Especially, the variability of the proportional significance among the different secondary metro-rhythmical features is not likely to be squeezed into a formula of strict priorities. We will, however, try to develop a set of criteria within which the probability of some criterial combinations will help to confine the occurrence of others to a minimum. It should be clear from what has been said that to make use of this theory of structural metre with the intention of producing one, and only one, metrical pattern for a particular free verse poem, is to bark up the wrong tree and end up in frustration. Although the metro-rhythmic potential of free verse is undoubtedly higher than that of traditional verse, it is still sufficiently low to be curbed by a metrical theory that undertakes to tackle the problems involved in the rhythmic explanation of free verse.

4.2. Assumptions and presuppositions

In order to pave the way for our theory of structural metre, we need to discuss certain fundamental assumptions about poetry. Roman Jakobson writes: *"The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection into the axis of combination"* (in Sebeok 1960: 358). The far-reaching consequences of this extremely acute statement should be acknowledged by all who wish to shed some light on the darker sides of poetics.[158] While the normal use of language hinges on a paradigmatic selection of words within the syntagmatic sequence of a text, the poetic

[158] For a detailed discussion of Jakobson's concept of the poetic function and the notion of equivalence, see Küper (1988: 11 ff.).

use of language turns to the syntagmatic chain as the primary determinant of any paradigmatic choice. Thus, in non-poetic language, our preference of one expression to another is governed by semantic suitability alone, whereas, in poetry, the relative impact of meaning is greatly diminished by the equally important linguistic structures of a text. Since the principle of equivalence informs all aspects of a syntagmatic sequence - one syllable is equivalent to all other syllables with regard to its phonological form and its syntagmatic position - it is impossible for a poem to sink into complete structural obscurity. Even free verse, despite its apparent independence of regular form, is subject to the Jakobsonian principle of syntagmatic equivalence, and, therefore, ought to be analysed in structural terms; even though the irregularity of its sound- and stress patterns makes it more difficult for us to discern an accentual free verse structure than to recognize the patterns of a metrically regular poem.

If, on the axis of combination, each syllable is equivalent to all other syllables, it follows that the *different* syllabic features are, at the level of the syllable, also equivalent. Thus, stress intensity and vowel quality, for example, are equivalent *qua* syllabic features; they are not equivalent *qua* stress feature or vowel feature, respectively. The point is, however, that if *different* syllabic features are equivalent, there exists no *a priori* dominance of some kinds of features over others. While one poem may stand out for its pervasive alliteration, another will be marked because of its gripping metre, and a third one may remain rather inconspicuous in appearance since its linguistic features blend perfectly into one homogeneous uniformity. In principle, all kinds of poetic characteristics are equally relevant to the understanding of a poem; and it is but our *interpretation*, which may render some features more important than others. The poetic function, activated by the mere intention of a writer to make poetry, suppresses the general preponderance of meaning in favour of the non-semantic features of language, and provides the latter with a system in which each set of linguistic features contributes equally to the effect of the poem as a whole. The omnipresence in poetry of the principle of syntagmatic equivalence encourages, or even necessitates, an understanding of poetic form as a mosaic pattern rather than a hierarchical structure. In a poetic mosaic, the diverse elementary fragments combine to create an artistic whole through the sheer force of their multifaceted relativity. They first take shape according to their kind before each set of elements will be allocated its place in the overall structure of a poem by our interpretative assessment. One class of elements unites into a structural set which we call metre.

The elements of metre are characterized by their capacity to produce rhythm. Yet, rhythm, as we have shown in Chapter 1, does not exist outside the experience of rhythm, but depends on our ability and willingness to feel rhythm. Although regularity has been said to be the *sine qua non* of rhythmic experience, we will find that the most regular stress alternation in the prose language of a novel is less likely to arouse rhythmic excitement than is a comparatively irregular pattern in free verse. The reason for this oddity lies in the confinement of the poetic function to poetry. With the exception of the prose poem, we do not expect in works of prose the non-semantic features of language to become significant in themselves, because they are outstripped by meaning. In poetry, on the other hand, we will make any attempt to discover the various structures of all sets of linguistic features, since we know them to be important.[159] The perception of poetic rhythm usually proceeds from the

[159] The basic distinction between poetry and non-poetry in terms of semantic (in-)significance does not exclude the possibility of a poem being fairly unpoetic, and of a non-poem being very poetic. Yet, just

recognition of linguistic stress patterns. These have to be made temporally regular through rhythmization (see Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of rhythmization and its concomitants), whereby the syllables are so arranged that each metrically stressed syllable begins a measure, whereas varying numbers of unstressed syllables fill up the space between stresses. The linguistic tendency towards isochrony ensures that the rhythmization even of rather irregular stress patterns does not become a *tour de force.* Although the rhythmic regularity of accentual pulses is at the bottom of any stress-based metre, it is only in the regular patterns of traditional verse that metrical theory may profit from employing temporal measures in its explanatory description of poetic rhythm.[160] A structural metre of free verse, however, depends on too many other metrical components for us to include in the metrical representation a descriptive account of rhythmized structures. It will have to suffice that the rhythmization of stress patterns is an integral part of the metrical test reading, so that the effects of rhythmization will always be invisibly present in the description of a structural metre.

Yet, why do we rhythmize? And what are the non-linguistic criteria of rhythmization? These two questions affect the deepest recesses of rhythmic experience. We have to rely on plausible, though necessarily speculative answers, if we want to explain the rhythms of the delicate stress patterns in free verse. Our reply to the first question is prompt and straightforward: we rhythmize because we like rhythm. There seems to exist an innate human yearning for the satisfaction we derive from rhythmic experience. Accordingly, what can be rhythmized will be rhythmized, provided that a particular rhythmic supply meets our particular rhythmic demand. For not even the rhythmically most compelling poem is of the slightest use, if someone desires to dance! Rhythm emerges from a kind of order, a kind of well-structuredness. But rhythm also depends on motion and change. The principle of order and the principle of change merge into the principle of rhythm, so that rhythm becomes the dialectical amalgam of two opposing metaphysical phenomena. The universality of these principles is glaringly evident: whatever takes shape in nature - drops of water, blades of grass, or the honeycombs of bees - is constant in the simultaneity of space, but transient in the evanescence of time. The relationship between spatial order and temporal change is also obvious: a well-structured, symmetrical order will endure for a longer span of time (and, thus, be less subject to change) than a loose and unsymmetrical order. We can say, then, that the well-structured patterns of symmetry are more efficient than the ill-structured patterns of asymmetry. And we can say, moreover, that rhythmical language is catchier than unrhythmical language. The clear advantages of rhythm over non-rhythm justify our keen pursuit of rhythmic patterns in free verse.

Although rhythmization is essential to all rhythmic experience in any kind of poetry, we will generally find it easier to rhythmize the regular stress patterns of traditional verse than to rhythmize the irregular stress patterns of free verse. This is but a corollary of our previous assertion that structural regularity is closely linked with rhythm. While a predictable alternation of natural stress leaves hardly any choice for different rhythmizations and different metrical patterns, an unpredictable alternation entails a variety of possible metro-rhythmical interpretations and adaptations. It is, then, our task to rhythmize the linguistic material at hand in the

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as a poem written in an unpoetic style does not turn into non-poetry, a non-poem written in a poetic style does not become a poem.

[160] See, for example, the metrical theory by Standop (1989).

most successfully captivating manner. Since - owing to the affinities between rhythm and good structure - the rhythmization of irregular stress patterns is less convincing and less effective than the rhythmization of regular stress patterns, we try to optimize accentual alternation as far as linguistically possible. An ideal shape is the best guarantor of an ideal rhythmization. Before finally determining the various shades of shapes, from randomly wrought to ideally structured, we will first have a close look at the psychological aspects involved in the perception of gestalt.

The basic principle of gestalt psychology claims that forms are perceived as detached wholes rather than being conceived as mere additions of their constitutive elements.[161] But what determines wholeness? Stephen E. Palmer writes: "[A] system has important holistic characteristics (i.e., forms a 'Gestalt') to the extent that its parts are strongly interacting rather than independent" (in Beck 1982: 123). The whole is, then, more, or at least something other, than the sum of its parts by dint of its internal coherence. A triangle, for example, does not simply consist of three straight lines, it consists of a particular *structural arrangement* of these lines. The properties of the whole are perceptually more conspicuous than the properties of each of its parts. Thus, if the lines of a triangle were broken, or if its corners were rounded, we would still recognize the ensuing figure as a triangle. The gestalt offsets, through its perceptual pervasiveness, any minor corruption of its elementary components. Its structure prevails so much over the mere sum of its elements that any set of elements arranged in the same way will yield the same gestalt. There is, for example, no difference in gestalt between a geometrical form and its enlargement. As long as the proportions of a figural structure remain the same, the resulting gestalts will also remain the same.

In that gestalt is characterized by the two distinguishing properties of supersummativity and transposability, it becomes a universally applicable notion of everything that can be perceived as a detached whole in structure or shape. David Katz (1950: 30-39) gives an outline of the large scope of the gestalt concept, in which he does not hesitate to mention even the possibility of olfactory or gustatory gestalts. For instance, "the vanilla ice cream is by no means an '*and*-connection' but constitutes a form which is more than the sum of its component parts" (1950: 37). Since the taste of vanilla ice cream certainly does not have a particular shape or structure, it is clear that, for Katz, the test of a gestalt lies in its wholeness. Also with respect to acoustic phenomena, Katz maintains that

> [a]ll rhythmic processes, whether they occur in music, dancing, or everyday colloquial speech, can be treated scientifically only if regarded from a holistic viewpoint. No rhythmic experience is explainable on an atomistic basis. (1950: 35)

And, similarly, Kurt Koffka writes:

> [T]emporal wholes, like rhythms, melodies, sentences, cannot be theoretically discussed without the concept of organization. (1935: 434)

Auditory perception, it appears, is not too far a cry from visual perception. However, we should always be conscious of the fact that the temporal dimension of acoustic

[161] For an insider's account of the early developments which led to the first discoveries of gestalt principles, see Köhler (1969: 33-62).

gestalts necessitates the sequential growth of a pattern in which the effect of each element depends on the effects of prior elements.[162] This temporal dynamism must be regarded as a factor of uncertainty: for not only does each new element in the growing structure of an acoustic gestalt add its own impetus to the combined effects of its predecessors, but it may even destroy part of the previous pattern by changing the function of previous elements, and thus create a completely new structure.

The final gestalt should be recognized by its tendency towards *Prägnanz*. This tendency implies that "psychological organization will always be as 'good' as the prevailing conditions allow" (Koffka 1935: 110). And the shape of a pattern is "good", if we consider it to be regular, symmetrical, simple, and so on.[163] Whenever a structure or shape deviates from the ideal of a good gestalt, we will compensate mentally for any minor imperfections. However, this straightforward principle of *Prägnanz* should be taken with a pinch of salt, as D.W. Hamlyn points out. "It may well be the case," he writes, "that we have a *tendency* to see figures in a simple way, but this is by no means universal or unqualified" (1957: 54). Since our ability to prescind from structural aberrations is inversely proportional to the irregularity of a particular structure, we will have to concede to the more inscrutable patterns the possibility of alternative good shapes. It is evident that complex structures require a stronger perceptual effort than simple structures before they can be reduced to the *Prägnanz* of a gestalt.

The perception of a form presupposes its separate existence, as there can be no form without a detaching outline. This outline is determined by principles which govern both the inner structure of that form and its distinctness from other forms: while the principles of good shape contribute indirectly to the discreteness of a form, the principles of perceptual organization exert an immediate influence on the crystallization of a gestalt. We will give a brief account of these latter laws of organization as they have been discussed by Max Wertheimer (see the Wertheimer translation in Ellis 1938: 71-88). He mentions the following factors by which elements combine into groups:

> (1) Proximity: elements which are close to one another in time or space tend to form groups.
> (2) Similarity: elements which are alike in any of their characteristics tend to form groups.
> (3) Uniform destiny: a perceived grouping will be reinforced if all elements of one group undergo the same operation; whereas if some elements of one group and some elements of another group undergo the same operation, the previously perceived grouping will be spoilt.
> (4) Objective set: in a grouping sequence, later groupings may be influenced by previous ones.
> (5) Direction: elements which combine into a unidirectional sequence tend to form groups.
> (6) Good continuation: additions to an incomplete object produce unity, if they continue the logical structure of that object.

[162] Kurt Koffka writes: "If each member of a temporal unit depends upon the field produced by the preceding members as well as upon its own stimulus, then we can also understand why the direction of the unit becomes more and more determined the further the sequence proceeds. With each new member the field grows in extent and thereby in power" (1935: 450).

[163] It is in this gestaltist sense that we will use the term "good" when referring to the rhythmical or structural features of a metrical unit. The word in question is not intended to furnish an aesthetic or artistic evaluation of stress patterns.

(7) Closure: a sequence of elements is likely to form a group, if the last one links up immediately with the first, and thus brings about a self-enclosed unit.

(8) Experience: independent elements are grouped if their grouping has become perceptually habitual.

In the above presentation of grouping factors, we have tried to give a neutral description of each item in order to indicate their general applicability to the formation of all kinds of gestalts. However, it will easily be seen that some factors are more likely to relate to visual gestalts, while others might be particularly suitable for auditory groupings. Often, a gestalt will result from the interplay of different laws of organization, and in that case depend on their combined effects. If the factors involved team up with one another, the resulting shape will be strongly pronounced and stable; whereas if some factors counteract others, the resulting shape is likely to be vague and unstable. Since a metrical grouping is basically determined by syntactic structures and stress pattern variation (apart from being governed by *Prägnanz*), the factors of proximity, objective set, and good continuation are metrically most relevant: for proximity in time unifies the syllables within a syntactic unit, and objective set as well as good continuation control the variation between successive groupings. The factor of closure may play a role in structural metre, if we acknowledge the arrival of the final syllable in a mirror-symmetrical pattern as the closing of a unit. In the following, we shall proceed on the assumption that the formation of a free verse metre is based on its pertinent laws of organization.

A sequence of syllables is characterized by a continuous change in stress intensity from one syllable to the next. There are, then, hardly two adjacent syllables between which we could not perceive an accentual difference, so that the mere distinction between relatively weaker and stronger stresses entails a binary contrast of metrical stress and metrical non-stress. The structural consequences of this relative stress principle are obvious: in that the metrical abstraction tries to reflect the continuous alteration of absolute stress, a metrical non-stress is expected to be followed by a metrical stress, just as a metrical stress is expected to be followed by a metrical non-stress. If these expectations are not fulfilled, the demand for metrical change increases significantly. Thus, in general, sequences of three or more metrical stresses or non-stresses are comparatively rare, since a stress between two other stresses tends to become metrically unstressed, and a non-stress between two other non-stresses tends to become metrically stressed. Although this tendency can be said to constitute a metrical force in its own right, it is only in combination with the factors of good gestalt and the laws of perceptual organization that the relative stress principle bears upon the accentual alternation within metrical patterns.

In a first approach, some basic stress patterns of structural metre will now be discussed with reference to the various *Prägnanz* factors. For, ideally, the scope of a metrical unit is determined by the good shape of its pattern. There is no metrical unit without at least one metrical stress. If we limit (for practical reasons) our description of possible metrical structures to units with only one or two stresses, and if we stipulate (again, only for reasons of practicability) that syllabic sequences of more than two consecutive stresses or non-stresses should not occur; we will obtain the following patterns, in which metrical stress will be indicated by “X”, and metrical non-stress by “x”.

(1) X monosyllabic unit: criteria of good shape do not apply,

(2) Xx disyllabic unit: regular contrastive falling,

(3) xX disyllabic unit: regular contrastive rising,
(4) XX disyllabic two-stress unit: regular repetitive and symmetrical.

It is patent that units (1)-(3) are in themselves metro-rhythmically utterly ineffective: they require a favourable context in order to gain metrical weight. Yet, in spite of their gestalts being objectionable (unit (1) does not even constitute one), it will be seen that such elementary units cannot be avoided altogether in a structural metre. Unit (4), though of perfect good gestalt, lacks the second aspect, change, of the rhythmic principle and is, therefore, metro-rhythmically weak. Whenever such a unit occurs, it needs to be rhythmized with the equivalent of a metrical pause between the two stresses.

The effort necessary to rhythmize stress clashes by means of an implied non-stress which re-establishes rhythmic regularity, reveals the metrical superiority of alternating stress patterns such as units (5) and (6).

(5) xXx trisyllabic monostress unit: regular symmetrical,
(6) XxX trisyllabic two-stress unit: regular symmetrical.

The wave-like shapes resulting from a stress between two non-stresses, or a non-stress between two stresses, have been said to represent the most essential rhythmic patterns in verse.[164] And, indeed, the consistent alternation of stress shows that units (5) and (6) conform to the rhythmic principle of change in regularity by dint of their trisyllabic symmetry. However, despite this common feature of good gestalt, the two complementary patterns of units (5) and (6) are not equally well-shaped, owing to the different rhythmic roles of metrical stress and metrical non-stress. While the stresses in a metrical pattern determine the beginnings of rhythmized measures and thus make rhythm possible, the non-stresses merely help to fill these measures more or less fittingly. It is this markedness of the metrical stress which enables us to experience the shape of unit (6) as closed and, therefore, "better" than the shape of unit (5), which is open.

There are, in theory, another four patterns that have three syllables.

(7) Xxx trisyllabic monostress unit: irregular contrastive falling,
(8) xxX trisyllabic monostress unit: irregular contrastive rising,
(9) xXX trisyllabic two-stress unit: irregular contrastive rising,
(10) XXx trisyllabic two-stress unit: irregular contrastive falling.

None of these patterns is frequent as a metrical unit, since none of them accords with the principles of good gestalt. A trisyllabic word or phrase that qualifies as a metrical unit, and whose stress undulations seem most likely to yield the metrical abstractions of (7) or (8), will tend towards a description as XxX in order to achieve structural stability. In certain metrical contexts, however, this tendency towards symmetrical promotion is undermined by an all-embracing rhythmic flow of several metrical units, within which the comparatively slow movement of pattern (6) would be rather out of place. It should be noted, here, that patterns (7) and (8) are much less inclined towards symmetrical adjustments, if they occur not as metrical units but merely as parts of a metrical unit; and, in that case, they are usually not charged with an expectation of symmetry or closure. Units (9) and (10) are also liable to symmetrical harmonization; yet, there may be words or phrases whose contrastive trisyllabic two-stress patterns are either too strong to be adapted at all, or depend on heavy support from the metrical and semantic context in order to be rendered xXx. For a metrical unit to consist of pattern (10) is particularly exceptional, since its morphological or syntactic

[164] See Chapter 1, and Bräuer (1964: 10-12). It should be sufficiently clear from the context that the notion of a metrical unit must not be confused with the rather artificial concept of metrical feet.

structures are comparatively infrequent. Thus, a simple sentence of the form SV in which a monosyllabic noun without article is followed by a disyllabic intransitive verb, is probably the best realization of (10) XXx as a metrical unit. But even here, the metrical and semantic context may affect a change of pattern.

In our descriptive terminology of the various units, we have given a full account of the various characteristics (even though, in some cases, partial mention would have sufficed), because a thoroughly systematic description makes the identification of patterns easier. Thus, the combination of syllable number, number of stresses, shape, and movement, is clearly sufficient in order to infer the actual structure, provided that we adhere to our provisional stipulation of maximally two stresses or non-stresses in succession. Albeit this restriction reflects a tendency imposed by the principle of relative stress, it represents by no means an inviolable rule. As soon as the conjunction of metro-linguistic circumstances entails sequences of more than two stresses or non-stresses, we will find that the properties of regularity or irregularity may acquire a defining function rather than being logically deducible. However, the large variety of different patterns makes it impossible for some of them to be described unequivocally. We, therefore, deny any claims to descriptive exhaustiveness for our verbal accounts of the various stress structures in free verse, even though within the scope of this theoretical sketch of metrical patterns most descriptions will turn out to be exhaustively defining. The main purpose of a stress-pattern terminology is to facilitate the discussion of a metrical analysis.

While, in a trisyllabic unit, the combination of monostress with symmetry produces invariable regularity and, thus, good gestalt; the same combination in a tetrasyllabic unit results in one of two irregular patterns.

(11) xXxx tetrasyllabic monostress unit: irregular symmetrical falling,

(12) xxXx tetrasyllabic monostress unit: irregular symmetrical rising.

The descriptions of these units appear contradictory in themselves, since symmetry and irregularity are generally supposed to be mutually exclusive. However, an oxymoronic conjunction of the two terms becomes possible, if we regard symmetry for our purpose as the *approximation* to a metrical shape in which a medial dividing line or stress or non-stress reveals one half-shape as the mirror image of the other, and if we allow for rhythmization to offset temporally what is lacking in visual balance. Furthermore, the usual distinction between rising and falling patterns requires slight modification. In a description of metrical structure, these two adjectives apply to all metrical shapes except regular symmetry, so that the mere imbalance between the two halves of an irregular symmetry is called "rising" if the left side, being temporally first, has a longer run-up of metrical non-stresses than the right-side run-out; whereas the term "falling" is used if the symmetrical part on the right, being temporally final, dominates by dint of its number of non-stresses. Since, owing to the markedness of stress, we strive to anticipate the next accent within a metrical unit; a rising pattern is most likely to produce a *stringendo* effect, while a falling pattern feels more relaxed.[165]

The distinction between faster and slower patterns depends mainly on the number of non-stresses between stresses: the higher the number, the faster the pattern. Compare, for instance, the two following metrical shapes:

(13) XxxX tetrasyllabic two-stress unit: regular symmetrical,

(14) xXXx tetrasyllabic two-stress-clash unit: regular symmetrical.

[165] On rising and falling rhythms, see also Chapter 1.

The isochrony of rhythmization demands that the stress-clash in (14) should be test-read with a significant retardation on the first stress. By comparison, the rhythm of unit (13) is more lively, because its double non-stress necessitates a quicker pace between its perceptually isochronous stresses. This rhythmic discrepancy between the two units contrasts with the regular symmetry (and, therefore, good gestalt) of both patterns. While the "'stress valley'" of unit (13) is justly *felt* to be "a 'strong shape' (in the gestaltist sense)" (Tsur 1977: 61-62), we do not *feel* the same for the equally regular shape of unit (14) - obviously, because its rhythmic pattern and auditory gestalt pull in opposite directions. In order to comprehend the impact of the two forces at work in this metrical tug of war, we will have to delve into the relationship between the shape of a pattern and its rhythm.

We can conceive of a metrical stress pattern in two different ways: first of all, as a temporal sequence of rhythmic elements, but then also in terms of the simultaneous presence of these elements in an atemporal structure. This latter gestalt originates in our retrospective recognition of it as a temporal progression towards wholeness, so that a metrical shape can be assumed to be always dependent on the prior rhythmization of its elements. However, while a symmetrical good gestalt does not differentiate between the functions of a stress or non-stress, this accentual distinction is of vital importance to the rhythmization of a metrical pattern. Thus, a regular rhythmization will always produce a good shape, whereas a good shape need not be based on a regular rhythmization. Only stresses determine the temporal organization of a metrical pattern, but its gestalt relies on the distribution of both stresses and non-stresses. Yet, for all their separate co-existence, rhythmization and shape are so mutually interwoven that the rhythmic superiority of metrical stress to metrical non-stress cannot but percolate through to the gestalt of a metrical pattern and qualify the effectiveness of those good gestalts which contain rhythmically less favourable stress constellations. The stress-clash in unit (14) is a rhythmically unfavourable constellation.

Stress-clashes also occur in two other tetrasyllabic patterns:

(15) XXxx tetrasyllabic two-stress unit: regular contrastive falling,

(16) xxXX tetra syllabic two-stress unit: regular contrastive rising.

Unit (15) is comparatively rare, because of the pattern's weak gestalt and its infrequent phonological realization. And if a string of four syllables in a metrical unit appears at first sight to be stressed XXxx, it is probable that the slightest opportunity for a better shape and better rhythm will create an alternative. Thus, demotion of the first syllable or promotion of the last are the most likely options for a structural change. While the first alternative would produce the irregular symmetry of xXxx, the second would divide the unit into two subunits - one monostress and a trisyllabic two-stress pattern of regular symmetry, as indicated by the slash: X/XxX. If both changes could be effected simultaneously, we would obtain the ideal pattern of a regular repetition: xXxX. But if the two words which constitute the structure of (15) - a monosyllable followed by a trisyllable - are too obstinately impliable (for instance, because of the, perhaps, alliterative significance of the monosyllable and the general impossibility of promoting the final syllable in a trisyllabic compound with secondary stress on the medial syllable[166]), then, the realization of unit (15) becomes almost unavoidable. Compared to (15), the rhythm in unit (16) is a little less awkward on account of the urgency with which the two initial non-stresses lead up to the consummation of the pattern. Still, if the metro-linguistic circumstances favoured a

[166] A concrete example would be, "bold bartender".

change, the structure of (16) would be superseded by a rhythmically more satisfactory shape.

The awkwardness of a pattern like (16) could be resolved into one of the following shapes:

(17) XxXx tetrasyllabic two-stress unit: regular repetitive falling,

(18) xXxX tetrasyllabic two-stress unit: regular repetitive rising.

These units represent ideal rhythmic patterns in that they regularize by repetition the contrastive change of units (2) and (3). Their different rhythmizations, however, contrast with their equally regular gestalts: while, in unit (17), rhythm and shape reinforce each other, the rhythmic movement of (18) runs counter to its gestalt. Although the most fundamental aspect of rhythmic perception consists in the regular recurrence of a pulse, the more complex operations relating to rhythmic grouping are largely independent of measure bounds. The perceptual organization of rhythm has its own rules according to which regularity is preferable to irregularity. Notwithstanding that both time measuring and pattern grouping are equally responsible for the general rhythmic impression of a syllabic sequence, we can conclude that the significance of metrical shape reaches far beyond the limited possibilities of rhythmization in contributing to the establishment of a structural metre.

We complete our list of one- and two-stress units by adding another 18 patterns:

(19) xXxXx pentasyllabic two-stress unit: regular symmetrical,

(20) xxXxX pentasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular repetitive rising decreasing ,

(21) XxXxx pentasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular repetitive falling increasing,

(22) XxxXx pentasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular repetitive falling decreasing,

(23) xXxxX pentasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular repetitive rising increasing,

(24) xxXXx pentasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular symmetrical rising,

(25) xXXxx pentasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular symmetrical falling,

(26) xxXxx pentasyllabic monostress unit: regular symmetrical,

(27) xXxxXx hexasyllabic two-stress unit: regular symmetrical,

(28) xxXxXx hexasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular symmetrical rising,

(29) xXxXxx hexasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular symmetrical falling,

(30) XxxXxx hexasyllabic two-stress unit: regular repetitive falling,

(31) xxXxxX hexasyllabic two-stress unit: regular repetitive rising,

(32) xxXXxx hexasyllabic two-stress-clash unit: regular symmetrical,

(33) xxXxXxx heptasyllabic two-stress unit: regular symmetrical,

(34) xxXxxXx heptasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular symmetrical rising,

(35) xXxxXxx heptasyllabic two-stress unit: irregular symmetrical falling,

(36) xxXxxXxx octosyllabic two-stress unit: regular symmetrical.

Given the variety of patterns, it is obvious that some of them are less likely to occur in a structural metre than others because of their rhythmical clumsiness or morpho-syntactic unsuitability. While stress-clashes are avoided wherever possible, the English language (even more than German) also does not favour metrical units ending in double non-stress. Thus, patterns (26) and (33), for example, tend to be altered into the equally regular but rhythmically stronger shapes of XxXxX and XxXxXxX,

respectively. However, the static stability of these patterns does not always agree with the prevailing rhythmic character of a poem. Some contexts would support more varying metrical units, such as numbers (20) to (23), where it has become necessary to make an additional distinction between "increasing" and "decreasing" patterns, depending on whether the repeating part of the unit augments or curtails the pattern of the repeated part. These slight variations within the unit are rhythmically particularly effective since they add a further dimension of controlled deviation to the rhythmic principle of change within regularity.

Metrical variation is meta-rhythmical refinement. While a monotonous regularity of stress alternation reduces the possibilities of the rhythmic principle to the operational level of syllabic sequence, a varied metrical structure increases the potential of rhythm in that it produces change within the predictability of different patterns. Rather than repeating the exact shape of a previous metrical unit or subunit, a variation holds on only to the more basic characteristics of an original pattern in order to be able to change some less significant features. As long as we can discern a rhythmic continuity between a metrical structure and its successor, the question as to which features are altered and how many, does not affect variation as such. It is, however, patent that some variations are more powerful than others. For instance, a variation based on *equal* stress number and *different* number of syllables is generally more effective[167] than a variation based on *different* stress number and *equal* number of syllables, because the underlying rhythmization responsible for metrical consistency is governed by stresses and not by syllables. A variation that dispenses with equal stress number as its metrical constant, might then at best rely on gestalt features for the compatibility of its componential patterns. Yet, metrical shape - if taken at face value in its actual gestalt - is made up of nothing other than a certain number of stress positions within a given string of syllables. The possible distinction between symmetrical, repetitive, and contrastive patterns usually fails to provide a thoroughly good starting-point for rhythmically relevant variations. Thus, stress number is the most probable invariable of any metrical variation. But, as we will see, there are also exceptions to this rule.

Repetition is the principle of all variation, and within the scope of this principle, regularity and change vie with each other for supremacy. Although rhythmization makes any two-stress pattern the variation of another two-stress pattern, and any three-stress pattern the variation of another three-stress pattern, we can say that those variations in which regularity prevails over change are most readily accessible to our rhythmic perception and, therefore, most powerful. Thus, a variation that augments a given metrical unit by just one non-stress, is more likely to be considered rhythmically effective than a variation which adds two or more non-stresses to its original. And, likewise, a variation that diminishes a given metrical unit by just one non-stress, is more likely to be considered rhythmically effective than a variation which subtracts two or more non-stresses from its original. However, the absence of a non-stress which, in the case of diminution, causes a clash between two metrical stresses, will result in a variational disadvantage; whereas, on the other hand, the presence of a non-stress which, in the case of augmentation, resolves a previous clash

[167] A metro-rhythmical stress pattern is *effective* if it is "good" (see footnote 13, above). Thus, a simple rhythm is more effective than a complex rhythm. For instance, there seems to me no doubt that the heavy booming beat of hard rock music pierces the ears more effectively than the refined rhythmic phrases of a piano sonata by Mozart. With this example, I hope to have provisionally stripped the word "effective" of its possible aesthetic or artistic connotations.

between two stresses in the original pattern, will result in a variational advantage. The effect of a variation depends on its shape and on its relation to the preceding unit. It is the test of rhythmization which, finally, determines to what extent a variational stress pattern succeeds in carrying on the metrical properties of the original structure.

We have claimed that variation must repeat some essential traits of the original pattern in order to be effective, and we have argued that to retain the number of stresses is likely to yield the best variational results. However, stress number is not the only factor to be taken into consideration. If, for example, a hexasyllabic unit of the pattern xXxxXx is followed by a disyllabic two-stress unit, XX, the variation can hardly be called particularly successful, because of the striking difference in shape between the two units. The gestalt of a pattern can make rhythmization easier to the extent that its non-stresses help to smooth the temporal regularization between metrical stresses. If the above hexasyllabic pattern preceded a trisyllabic symmetrical monostress unit, xXx; the variation would not only echo the previous pattern by repeating the second half, but it would also represent a good continuation, since the combined structure, xXxxXx|xXx, preserves the characteristic gestalt features of the original pattern. Thus, it is possible to produce effective variations in that a given metrical unit is complemented by part of its own structure.

An attempt to list the various kinds of metrical variation according to their alleged rhythmic effectiveness, would be wasted effort, because the differences between variational patterns are often too subtle to permit of a clear distinction between their respective powers of rhythm. Thus, those variations which change only the *position* of stresses while stress number and number of syllables remain constant, are not necessarily more compelling than those variations which alter the previous pattern by just one non-stress, or than those variations which merely echo the metrical structure of the original. Any of these kinds of variation depend on the joint effects of good gestalt and straightforward rhythmization for the construction of a rhythmically powerful combination of patterns. The mutual relationship between metrical shape and rhythmizability entails one restrictive prerequisite for metro-rhythmical efficacy, namely, the general avoidance of stress-clashes. The only exception to this rule consists in the resolving of an inevitable metrical irregularity through repetition; for a repeated stress-clash pattern becomes regular with regard to its subsequent duplicate in the act of repeating. But the question remains: why do we tend to experience the immediacy between two metrical stresses as rhythmically awkward?

In order to explain the rhythmical clumsiness of a stress-clash, we need to understand how metrical variation is employed to produce different rhythmic effects. For this purpose, it is necessary that we go back to the essential patterns of traditional metres. In regular four-beat verse, the interlinear rhythmic effects are produced by changes affecting the metrical form of line-endings, the so-called *cadences*.[168] With regard to these cadences, there are, in principle, three different possibilities of linear rhythmization: the end of a line may, or may not, require temporal compensation through metrical pause; or, if such compensation is rhythmically not satisfactory, the penultimate syllable may be temporally stretched so as to fill a whole bar.[169] The

[168] I merely translate, here, the German term *Kadenz*, used by Heusler (1956) and Standop (1989).

[169] For the three kinds of cadences, see Standop (1989: 37-39). Note that my description of the third cadence states only implicitly what Ewald Standop would regard as the defining criterion of a resounding cadence ("klingende Kadenz"): namely, the necessity of promoting a final weak syllable, because it happens to take the first beat of a bar. My definition relegates Standop's *trisyllabic* resounding cadences (e.g. "John Gilpin was a citizen" (1989: 37)) to the straightforward normality of a full cadence ("volle Kadenz", our variant (1), below).

corresponding metrical stress patterns and their possible rhythmizations can be rendered as follows:

(1) no compensation required: xXxXxXxX,
(2) with metrical pause: xXxXxX,
(3) without metrical pause: xXxXxXX.

The trochaic patterns function correspondingly. It appears that, in a strong four-beat rhythm, variant (3) represents often the more effective alternative compared to the equally possible variant given in (4):

(4) with metrical pause: xXxXxXx.

Although, in general, the rhythmization in (3) can always be changed to the pattern in (4), as the linguistic material does not ask for a clash of stresses;[170] the tendency to prefer, in certain cases of syllabic length, the third variant to the fourth, reveals the subtleties of rhythm even in the ostensible rhythmic simplicity of nursery rhymes.

If we allow for five different cadences - variants (1), (2), and (3), plus one disyllabic modification of each of the first two variants (xXxXxXx***Xx*** and xXxXx***Xx***) - there are, in theory, 25 combinatory possibilities of creating interlinear rhythmic effects. Ewald Standop's more practical distinction between only four cadences leaves him with 16 combinations. He lists eight of them with examples and, then, concludes:

> [Die noch verbleibenden acht Kadenzenkombinationen] sind wahrscheinlich alle belegbar, bekannte Beispiele fehlen jedoch. (1989: 121)
>
> (I translate: It is likely that the remaining eight combinations of cadences can be attested; yet, well-known examples are missing.)

This statement indicates the comparative rarity of some combinations of cadences. If we analyse these cases, we will find that they tend to share certain common features. Thus, it is, for example, conspicuous that the majority of these infrequent combinations consist of a cadence with temporal compensation followed by a full cadence without temporal compensation. And as an intuitive rhythmic introspection will confirm, a sequence in which the pattern xXxXxX precedes the pattern xXxXxXxX, runs counter to our habitual experience and expectation. From this we can draw two basic conclusions: first, it appears that a variational diminution is more effective than a variational augmentation; and, secondly, we can say that metrical pause signifies closure. The latter assumption might well be elevated to a principle, for it would explain why a stress-clash - which can only be rhythmized with the equivalent of a rhythmical pause - is usually avoided in the middle of a metrical unit, whereas its occurrence between two adjacent patterns is of comparatively little consequence to rhythmic smoothness. Owing to the generality of the above conclusions, it is to be expected that they will also play a role in free verse metrics.

To what extent does a metrical pause contribute to the delimitation of a metrical unit? In the case of a regular four-beat rhythm in which four-stress lines alternate with

[170] Ewald Standop gives two illuminating examples of trochaic four-beat lines with a resounding cadence ("klingende Kadenz"): "Backe, backe Kuchen", and "Sing a song of sixpence" (1989: 38). Owing to the long first syllable of "Kuchen", the German example is more typically resounding than the English example, where the short syllables of "sixpence" may also be cadenced as in version (4), above.

three-stress lines,[171] the metrical pause at the end of each three-stress line helps to organize the interlinear rhythm into distinctive metrical double units. Yet, the necessity of temporal compensation in the three-stress line of a four-beat rhythm presupposes the coincidence of metrical and syntactic boundaries; for a pause that lacks linguistic justification is hardly sustainable in metre. In that metrical pause signifies closure, it is likely to coincide with the boundary of a metrical unit. However, a metrical unit is only occasionally determined by metrical pause - the more common determinants being syntax and lineation. While the line as an *artificial* metrical unit depends for a certain rhythmic smoothness on syntactic co-operation,[172] the sentence structure provides a *natural* means of metro-rhythmical patterning. Unless syntax furnishes the basis of metrical grouping, metre will inevitably be out of harmony with the syntactic structures, and accordingly forfeit any pretensions to the sole illumination of poetic rhythm. The artificiality of a metre that dispenses with syntax as its rhythmic frame must then result in a dialectical tension between the competing rhythmical effects of metrical and syntactic units. Since free verse refuses generally to accept the line as a defining quantity of metre, we should not expect any contrapuntal tension to arise from the juxtaposition of free verse lineation and free verse syntax. For the determination of its units, a structural metre must rely on syntactic patterns in the first place.

The metrical preponderance of sentence structures in free verse does not rule out the possibility for the line to emerge as a metrically relevant unit which either conterpoints or reinforces the syntactic patterns. As lineation is an important visual means of syllabic grouping - a means without which verse does not exist - the idea suggests itself that such a striking recurrent feature should be utilized for the delimitation of regular stress patterns. Thus, whenever syntax provides two equally favourable choices of metrical units, we will opt for that which is additionally supported by lineation. Yet, if syntax and lineation fail to tally, only the context can decide their issue: unless the interlinear pattern of a poem reveals a strong inclination towards uniformity or well-structuredness, the scales will turn on the side of syntax as the prevailing source of metrical organization. If regular lineation dominates, we will have to question our use of the free verse label and examine the various elements that contribute to the impression of linear regularity. A poem which is apparently conceived as metrically regular owing to the approximation of each line to equal stress number and equal number of syllables, but which is at the same time perceived

[171] Note that it does not matter if we speak of alternating four-stress and three-stress lines rather than describing the alternation in terms of different cadences, as long as we make it clear that both lines have the same metre.

[172] A line's visual detachment does not automatically make it a metrical unit. In regular verse, the effects of a straightforward linear rhythm hinge upon rhyme or metrical pause in addition to syntactic constraints. Moreover, a line-final metrical pause that is required by metre and granted by syntax, tends to assert its significance through rhyme, whereas a metrically demanded but syntactically unwarranted pause (a performative rendering of which would be subject to rhythmic negotiation) dispenses with rhyme. Coventry Patmore's contention that English blank verse is impossible without a catalectic pause (see 1903: 258), is only tenable if we assume the iambic pentameter to be metro-rhythmically short of a sixth beat as part of the metre on level M, regardless of the syntactic context. A strong Miltonic enjambment, for example, would then have to be considered a metrical violation, because its lack of an adequate syntactic break at the end of a line renders any required catalectic pause rhythmically irrelevant. The iambic pentameter of Pope's heroic couplets, on the other hand, would not require metrical pause to signify closure because of the rhyme; but, here, the syntactic reinforcement of the line as a metrical unit favours the rhythmic experience of a catalectic sixth beat as an interlinear metrical pause.

to be rhythmically irregular because of the highly unpredictable distribution of stresses - such a poem could be analysed metrically either by trying to re-establish what one would regard as the poet's extremely artificial device of accentual patterning, or by ignoring the alleged design of the author and applying the rules of structural metrics. However, linear predominance leaves no doubt that, in such a case, a metrical analysis would have to abandon the concept of a syntactic basis and seize on the line as the metrical unit. For a structural metre is usually incompatible with a linear stress metre.[173]

Syntax structures language into phrases, clauses, and sentences. These syntactic units are hierarchically involved in that a sentence consists of clauses, which for their part consist of phrases. As a corollary, the boundary of a sentence is at the same time also the boundary of a clause and phrase, and the boundary of a clause is at the same time also the boundary of a phrase. Thus, it is evident that the boundary of a sentence is more marked than the boundary of a clause, and the boundary of a clause is more marked than the boundary of a phrase. The markedness of a syntactic boundary determines its rhythmic significance, so that a metrical unit which coincides with a simple sentence is metro-rhythmically more conspicuous than a metrical unit which coincides with a clause or phrase. In metrical grouping, the boundary of a phrase is, therefore, more likely to be overridden by aspects of gestalt than is the boundary of a clause or sentence. We realize that, owing to the simultaneous impact of several determinants on the crystallization of a metrical unit, the structure of a free verse metre cannot be as strictly hierarchical as the syntax on which it is grounded. Thus, one metrical unit is basically equivalent to any other metrical unit, irrespective of their syntactic function. Syntax is only important with regard to the *combination* of metrical patterns, since a weak metro-syntactic boundary can either be reinforced by a smooth variation between adjacent units, or it can be checked by the rhythmic gap between contrasting patterns. Our choice of a metrical unit represents, therefore, the upshot of careful considerations as to the rhythmically most effective fusion of metrical shape and syntactic structure.

The amalgamation of stress pattern gestalt and syntax depends on previous negotiations between the aspects of good shape and the linguistic structures of syllabic prominence. While the main accent in a polysyllable is usually incontestably definitive, all other accents of words and phrases are liable to structural or semantic interference, when it comes to reducing the number of accentual grades to the metrical duality of stress and non-stress. Thus, the various degrees of weak stress in polysyllabic words can easily be adapted to an ideal metrical shape, if the difference between adjacent stresses is relatively small. The higher the degree of stress, the greater tends to be the disparity between contiguous stresses, and the more difficult becomes, therefore, the possibility of metrical stress adjustment. A regular metrical set will assert itself on level M against the isolated occurrence of an opposing linguistic stress pattern, whereas a more varied metrical environment will have to respect a word's accentual idiosyncrasy. What is more, phrasal accent may convert the lexical stress of semantically less important polysyllables into a metrical non-stress, and thus provide the basis of a possible stress pattern reversal, motivated by the

[173] For a possible exception to this rule, see our metrical discussion of the opening lines of "The Loving Shepherdess" by Robinson Jeffers, below.

metrical context.[174] In spite of this occasional flexibility, it will be seen that polysyllables, when compared to monosyllabic words, are still metrically rather unpliable.

The metrical versatility of monosyllabic words is mainly due to semantic licence. Thus, the structural metrist is often presented with an option to promote either of two adjacent weak-stress monosyllables, or, likewise, to demote either of two adjacent strong-stress monosyllables. While promotion is, in most cases, quite straightforward, the demotion of a monosyllable for reasons of metrical shape is more complicated and involves semantic changes. A tetrasyllabic noun phrase consisting of preposition, article, adjective, and noun head, would usually be described in terms of a regular contrastive stress pattern, xxXX. However, under the influence of good gestalt and rhythmizability, this asymmetrical shape is likely to give way to one of the three ideal patterns of four syllables - xXxX, XxXx, or XxxX. Our choice of one of these patterns will be determined by its metrical environment as well as by its semantic justifiability. A test reading will have to clarify whether the metrical demotion of either adjective or noun is semantically warrantable, for such a metrical adaptation entails at least relational changes in meaning. Sometimes, it will even be necessary to retain the contrastive pattern in order not to spoil the sense and distort the natural stress relations beyond a certain limit of test reading. This is how the semantic import of a poem manifests itself in the establishment of a metrical structure by conditioning the feasibility of variable stress patterns.

When we come to pass in review the assumptions and presuppositions of a structural metre, we realize that, in free verse, a metrical pattern can only emerge from the equal interplay of all factors involved in the rhythmic experience of poetic language. These factors can be divided into two distinct groups, the first of which comprises the abstract concepts of rhythm and gestalt in their multifaceted variation of shapes and patterns, while the second group consists of factors that are more closely related to the concreteness of the linguistic material. The contrary nature of these two factorial sets becomes obvious as we consider the fact that the approximation of a perfect rhythmic gestalt, as demanded by the first group of factors, is curbed by a linguistic momentum of inertia which results from the restrictions of syntax and lexical stress in the second group. Free verse weighs the factors of good shape and rhythmizability against the persistence of linguistic features in order to find a metrical balance that unites the opposing forces by doing justice to both of them. The ideal of a perfectly regular metrical pattern is no longer predominant, since the natural rhythms of language will have their say, too. Starting out from the general equality of all metrical components, it is now our task to examine the practical implications of the above theoretical assumptions as we try to establish a structural metre for a large variety of different kinds of free verse.

[174] The most typical examples of metrically hermaphrodite polysyllables are disyllabic prepositions (such as “into”, “upon”, etc.) whose lexical stress patterns are easily inverted under the influence of a reverse metrical impetus in the appropriate linguistic context.

4.3. The establishment of a structural metre

Although the process of establishing a structural metre depends on all metrical components simultaneously, we need to assess them first each in their own right before a fruitful evaluation of their comparative metrical significance can be made. Most fundamental to the emergence of metre in free verse are repeated rhythmized test readings, by which we constantly renew our awareness of a poem's rhythmical smoothness or roughness. This awareness controls all further steps towards the formation of a structural metre, since what we strive for is the best possible relative regularity of metrical stress patterns. The first cornerstones in the crystallization of such patterns are provided by syntax, as the boundaries of syntactic phrases represent potential metrical boundaries. Yet, a final decision as to which syntactic boundaries should become metrically relevant must be suspended until further investigation into the distribution of lexical stress patterns and their metro-rhythmical suitability furnishes sufficient support for a definitive delimitation of metrical units. To establish a structural metre is to reconcile the linguistic givens of a free verse poem with a binary stress pattern that comes as close as is reasonably possible to the metrical ideal of a regular accentual alternation. However, the obstacles that will invariably occur, when we attempt to reconcile the mutually conflicting elements of free verse metrics, need not necessarily be smoothed away, but should rather serve as indicators of metrical complexity. For the actual process of metrical formation is as important as its outcome.

The following passage (ll. 1-4) from "The Loving Shepherdess" by Robinson Jeffers will provide a first example of how structural metrics can work:

> The little one-room schoolhouse among the redwoods
> Opened its door, a dozen children ran out
> And saw on the narrow road between the dense trees
> A person - a girl by the long light-coloured hair.

The prose-like narrative style, which is dominant throughout the whole poem, does not pose any syntactic problems. Nevertheless, it will be seen that non-syntactic factors also contribute to our choice of a particular syntactic subdivision. Here is our segmentation of the sentence structure:

(1) The little one-room schoolhouse
(2) among the redwoods
(3) Opened its door,
(4) a dozen children
(5) ran out
(6) and saw
(7) on the narrow road
(8) between the dense trees
(9) A person -
(10) a girl
(11) by the long light-coloured hair.

The syntactic outline is obvious; units (1) to (3) form a main clause in which the subject, (1) and (2), consists of a noun phrase, (1), postmodified by a prepositional phrase, (2); and the predicate, (3), is a verb phrase made up of a finite transitive verb and the pertinent direct object. The second main clause, (4) to (11), co-ordinates two

predicates - (5), and (6) to (11) - which depend on the same subject, (4). While the first predicate consists of an intransitive verb, (5); the second begins with a finite transitive verb linked by a conjunction, (6), followed by two adverbials, (7) and (8), before the predicate is completed by a direct object, (9) to (11), composed of a noun phrase, (9), and an apposition, (10) to (11), whose prepositional phrase, (11), justifies as postmodifier the foregoing nominal specification, (10). There is a general preference for groupings that respect the boundary between a subject and its predicate rather than splitting off the object and joining subject and verb. But the immediacy of a verb and its object is lost if other phrases come in between, as in units (6) to (9). On the other hand, an intransitive verb functioning as predicate may easily combine with the preceding subject because any preferable grouping alternatives are missing. In the above syntactic analysis, however, a fusion of units (4) and (5) would undermine the parallelism between the two predicates by implicitly denying their double link with the grammatical subject.

Our syntactic grouping is at the same time also a suitable grouping of metre, in which the metrical units and their stress patterns could be rendered as follows:

(1) xXxXxXx (2) xXxXx
(3)XxxX (4) xXxXx (5) xX
(6) xX (7) xxXxX (8) xXxxX
(9) xXx (10) xX (11) xxX/XxxX.

Units (1) to (3) are metrically straightforward and effective, because their lexical stress undulations are easily and unambiguously reduced to binary patterns, and because the resulting sequence of metrical shapes develops in compelling variational smoothness. Thus, the regular symmetrical heptasyllabic three-stress unit (1) is echoed by the equally regular symmetrical pentasyllabic two-stress unit (2), before unit (3) furnishes a two-stress variation of the previous pattern. A rhythmized reading reveals the particulars of this variational sequence; namely, how syntax and metre balance each other in the linkage between units. While syntax requires a stronger connection between units (1) and (2) than between units (2) and (3); the metrical junctures counterpoise the syntactic relationships in that the abutting non-stresses of units (1) and (2) emphasize, by dint of their albeit slight disruption of the regular stress alternation, the metrical boundary between two syntactically close patterns, and in that the good continuation of the alternating pattern in unit (2) through the initial stress of unit (3) provides a smooth metrical transition where syntax, and lineation, draw a clearer dividing line.[175] However, the transitional effect between units (2) and (3) is also qualified metrically by the strong shape of the latter, which produces a rhythmic impression of self-containment and closure, and, therefore, of detachment. What has been said about the metrical relationship between units (2) and (3) does not hold true for the metrical relationship between units (3) and (4); for their structural order is reversed so that - even though the stress pattern of (4) equals the stress pattern of (2) - any expectations of good continuation must originate in pattern (3), which would demand a double non-stress at the beginning of (4).

[175] The rhythmic effects of the metrical pattern in units (1) to (3) become particularly clear if we compare them to the rhythmic effects of a slightly different construct:

The little one-room schoolhouse in the woods
Opened its door, [....]

where the postmodification, “in the woods” is so closely linked to the preceding noun phrase that they are likely to form one metrical unit.

The disyllabic monostress units of (5) and (6) need to combine in order to become metrically effective, despite their lineal and syntactic separation. Instead of the resulting regular rising repetition, the combination could also yield a strong shape as in (3), since the lexical stress pattern of "ran out" leaves sufficient semantic scope for us to assign metrical stress to the first rather than to the last syllable. This latter option, it is true, would render units (4), (5), and (6) metrically repetitive of units (2) and (3), but it would also violate the lineal and syntactic boundary between the two parallel predicates through the strong shape of its rhythmically stringent stress valley, XxxX. The first version, on the other hand, which favours the pattern xXxX for the combination of units (5) and (6), has the advantage of conceding the necessity of a syntactic boundary after the second syllable without losing in metrical regularity. There is, however, one possibility for an alternative metro-syntactic interpretation: if we neglect the twofold predicative bond of the subject in unit (4), we might combine the patterns of (4) and (5) into one metrical unit, which could either be structurally identical to unit (1), or form an increasing rising repetition, xXxXxxX, which would favour a subsequent variation, xXxxXxX, by the conjoined patterns of (6) and (7). Yet, this interpretative option would leave unit (9) metro-syntactically isolated, since the combination of units (6) and (7) fails to reflect adequately the rhythmical impact that emanates from the syntactic separation of a verb and its direct object by two prepositional phrases. The strong syntactic link between unit (6) and unit (9) is metrically important in so far as it determines rhythmic closure; yet, it does not govern the primarily sequential stress pattern variations: while we would certainly consider units (7) and (8) to be rhythmically subordinate within the syntactic frame of units (6) and (9), we could not prescind from the *metrical patterns* of the *enclosed* units in order to bring about a direct perceptual connection between the *metrical patterns* of the *enclosing* units.

The accentual structure of (7) and (8) is subject to rather intricate metrical considerations. We notice that the two adverbials are parallel in their grammatical sequence of preposition, plus definite article, plus adjective, plus noun; yet, this parallelism is not shared by the metre. Various test readings will reveal the pros and cons of possible metrical patterns. For instance, a natural rendering of units (7) and (8), "on the narrow road between the dense trees", is likely to produce the following binary stress structure; (7) xxXxX (8) xXxXX, with an emphasis on all nouns and adjectives, as well as on the phonologically prominent second syllable of "between". This patterning, however, fails to be metrically effective, since the gestalt in (8) is irregular, and, to boot, unsuitable for a structural variation of the pattern in unit (7). The second shortcoming, but not the first, would be amended by a fast reading which levelled the prepositional stress in unit (8) so that its pattern could function as a two-stress variation of (7): (7) xxXxX (8) xxxXX. This would be our favourite pattern, if we were, *in this case*, to concede priority to the syntactic influence on metre rather than to the effects of stress pattern gestalt. One could also attempt a three-stress variation by promoting in a careful reading the preposition of unit (7) additionally to the instances of natural syllabic prominence. However, this variant - (7) XxXxX (8) xXxXX - would be rejected on account of the irregular shape of (8), and for contextual reasons: the syntactic boundary between unit (6) and unit (7) is not so strong as to justify the rhythmic impediment of an avoidable stress clash. Our metrical reading - (7) xxXxX (8) xXxxX - demotes the adjectival accent in (8) and thus dispenses with the metrical advantages of a syntactic parallelism; but, at the same time, it creates a pattern in which gestalt and variation are at their best. There is,

however, no doubt that this last rendering is to be preferred only because the positive effects of its metrical stress structure outstrip the negative effects of its syntactic and semantic concessions.

In that the adverbials of (7) and (8) suspend the syntactic flow between (6) and (9), the latter unit is somewhat cut off from its immediate predecessor. While lineation enhances this impression, the metrical linkage between the stress patterns of units (8) and (9) remains rather neutral.[176] Between the stress patterns of (9) and (10), however, the metrical transition of two abutting non-stresses emphasizes - as with units (1) and (2) - the syntactic boundary which separates the phrase in (9) from its apposition in (10) and (11).[177] While (10) may be said to function as a monostress variation of (9), it is, perhaps, more important to point out its metrical relationship to unit (11). Both its lack of metrical independence and the syntactic connection with (11) render a metrical fusion of units (10) and (11) rather likely. And, as a glance at the stress distribution will reveal, such a fusion clearly improves the shapes of both patterns. It is, however, interesting to see how the effective variational gestalt of xXxxX/XxxX is metrically counterpointed by the different syntactic subdivision in (10) xX (11) xxXXxxX. The stress clash in the middle of pattern (11) is metro-semantically not only unavoidable, but it can even be regarded as a metro-rhythmical imitation of the meaning at that particular point: for a rhythmization of the stress pattern would demand a lengthening of the monosyllable "long". Considering unit (11) on its own, one might be tempted to strengthen its shape by promoting the first syllable; however, there are two good reasons for abandoning that idea. One is, that the resulting stress clash between (10) and (11) would not reflect their close syntactic link; and a second reason is the gratuitous increase of stress number per line. This seems to be a rather strange argument in structural metrics, which constantly proclaims its general independence of any linear restrictions. Yet, in this case, we may witness the rare combinatory application of both a linear stress metre and a structural metre, since the relation between stress number and lineation appears to be largely constant in the various parts of the poem, but does not result in too obvious a pure stress metre. As long as these conjoint metrical approaches go hand in hand without contradicting each other, a poem's rhythmic effects may well be explained by both metres.

After this introductory exemplification of structural metrics, we will now focus on poetical instances where the process of metrical formation hinges upon interesting types of co-operation between the various contributory elements of metre in free verse. Taking syntax as our first point of departure, we contend that, whenever the sentence structure is ambiguous, this ambiguity is likely to be also reflected in the metrical pattern. Consider, for instance, the following sentence, line 9 of "The Storm" by Katherine Mansfield:

A huge green wave thundered and burst over my head.

Here, the syntactic equivocation consists in the relational position of the preposition, "over", which may either refer to both of the two preceding verbs, or only to the latter. While the first alternative would emphasize the syntactic boundary between the

[176] Note, how metre could have reinforced the disconnection between (8) and (9) by a stress clash, if we substituted, for example, the name "Clare" for the noun phrase "A person".
[177] Here, a replacement of (10), "a girl", by the name "Clare" would improve the rhythmic flow and provide a metrical link across the syntactic gap between units (9) and (10).

two verbs ("thundered and burst") and the prepositional phrase ("over my head"), the second possibility would reduce the detachment of the adverbial ("over my head") and point up the syntactic boundary between the two predicates ("thundered" and "burst over my head"). The metrical result could be a three-stress variation with a stress clash in each unit: (1) xXxXXx (2) xXXxxX. Or, if we allowed for a phrase boundary to prevail over a clause boundary, we might also metricize: (1) xXXX (2) XxxXxxxX, with a different three-stress variation. In the first alternative, however, where the double relevance of the adverbial ("over my head") creates a sentence without medial clause boundary since the two verbs are regarded as part of the same predicate rather than constituting different ones, the metro-syntactic subdivision would produce the following variational pattern: (1) xXxX (2) XxxX (3) XxxX. This is probably the metrically most effective interpretation. Metre demonstrates its influence on syntax and determines the semantic direction of the line - even though, in this case, a referential shift of the prepositional phrase causes only an admittedly insignificant change of meaning.

Syntax often conflicts with metrical gestalt. In some cases, syntax is stronger than shape; in others, shape is stronger than syntax. Thus, we encounter, in Samuel Beckett's "Enueg I", the following postmodifier:

> perishing out in the sunk field. (l. 51)

While it would be tempting to metricize this line: (1) XxxX/XxxX, according to a gestalt-governed grouping structure (subdivided by a slash), there are strong syntactic objections to such a seemingly ideal solution, for the preposition "out" has no connection with the previous verb form (as would be the case if the line read, "*dining* out in the sunk field"). We prefer, then, a metrical pattern in which the syntactic boundary between verb and preposition is smoothed over by a slightly irregular symmetry: (1) XxxXxxxX. If shape is to prove superior to syntax, there is usually strong contextual support for such a boost of gestalt significance. The next quotation, taken from "Telephoning Home" by Carol Ann Duffy, furnishes a good example:

> I try again, dial the nine numbers you wrote once
> on a postcard. [....] (ll. 7-8)

Rather than following the syntactic structure and metricizing, for instance,

> (1) xXxX (2) XxxXXx (3) xXx
> (4) XxXx,

we recognize the possibility of constructing a metrical pattern which features good shapes in ideal variation:

> (1) xXxX (2) XxxX/XxxX/X
> xxXx.

We should note, however, that, in these cases of metrical competition, it is not just our final option for a particular stress pattern, but the point of friction between all possible choices, which determines the metro-rhythmical range of a free verse poem.

Unlike the metrical ambivalence of vying alternative stress patterns, a structural metre can also be straightforward and clear in its presentation. When a syntactic structure is repeated without changing its accentual alternation, then, the metrical effect will be particularly penetrating:

> Zähle des Königs Augen mit
> daß sie nicht mehr weinen können.
> Zähle des Hauses Zimmer mit
> daß sie nicht mehr brennen können.

This passage - lines 6 to 9 from "Trauriges Märchen" by Peter Härtling - would not pass as free verse, were it not for the metrically more irregular context. There is no doubt about the stress structure:

> (1) XxxXxXxX
> (2) XxXxXxXx
> (3) XxxXxXxX
> (4) XxXxXxXx.

The metro-syntactic parallel is brought about by a repetition in units (3) and (4) of the variational pattern in units (1) and (2). Despite the metrical regularity, we should note that the change of cadences between full stressed and full unstressed line endings violates the principle of metrical closure in that the metrical pauses of stress clashes, which occur at the end of units (1) and (3), fail to coincide with the rhythmically prevailing grouping boundaries after units (2) and (4). In this way, the metro-syntactic aspirations towards bilinear rhythmic structures are dampened. While a perfect correspondence between the patterns of syntax and metre surfeits our rhythmic expectations with structural redundancies, a feeble metrical pattern is more appropriately supported by syntax. Consider, by way of illustration, the first six lines of Härtling's "Windspiel":

> Mein Hund, den ich nicht habe,
> nachts winselt er,
> flieht das Haus,
> meidet Spaziergänger,
> erschreckt die Winterfliege,
> beißt Stuhlbeine dünn.

The parallel predicative function of the syntactic units in lines 2 to 6 yields a rhythmic impetus which urges the variational efficacy of their metrical stress patterns. Unfortunately, the metrical units do not seem to have a common variational basis in terms of equal stress number: while the pattern in line 3 is most obviously regular two-stress symmetrical (XxX), line 5 would normally be recognized as a heptasyllabic three-stress unit (xXxXxXx). The syntactic unification of the different patterns in lines 2 to 6, however, desires their metrical compatibility. In order to fulfill this desire, we conform with the rules of two-stress variation, and metricize:

> (1) xX|xXxXx
> (2) xXxX

(3)XxX
(4)XxxXxx
(5) xXxXxxx
(6) xXxxX.

Considering the implications of this metrical analysis, we have to admit that the two-stress patterns - irregular as most of them are - depend for their rhythmical effects very much on the supportive role played by the syntactic parallelism.

To what extent, then, does the establishment of a structural metre presuppose an underlying syntactic pattern? Fragmentary free verse consisting of syntactically disconnected phrases gives a first impression of how much the metrical component of syntax contributes to the rhythmic effect of a poem. Here are the opening lines (ll. 1-7) of Barry Macsweeney's "Blackbird: elegy for William Gordon Calvert":

rude unwelcome guest
luckless wind
at family's four doors
nothing fever eyes wear
solid fern
narrow compass
abjuring life

In line 4, at the latest, it becomes clear that the various phrases are hardly supposed to hang together syntactically. And combinations which are possible in theory - such as "eyes wear/ solid fern" - appear to be unlikely for semantic reasons. As a result of this syntactic fragmentation, the effects of metrical variation rely exclusively on the sequential order of stress-pattern gestalts.

(1) XxXxX
(2) XxX
(3) xXxXxX
(4) XxXx (5) XX
(6) XxX
(7) XxXx
(8) xXxX.

The structural metre, here, is characterized by the variation in units (3) and (4) of units (1) and (2), as well as by the subsequent string of varying two-stress patterns.[178] This example shows that syntactic interconnection is not indispensable, if the metrical units are of reasonably good gestalt. However, as soon as syntax begins to destroy the shapeliness of its phrases, metre is likely to be reduced to a mere caricature of rhythmic panache. Compare, for instance, lines 13 to 15 of "Mediatrix" by David Haynes, and their metrication:

A balanced viewpoint, to reflect
On. A theme. Societal. Deprivation

[178] If the word "family's" in line 3 is considered to be disyllabic rather than trisyllabic, we metricize (3) xXxxX, and thus obtain metrical two-stress variation throughout units (2) to (8).

London. Style: Blacklife, style.

(1) xXxXx (2) XxX
x (3) xX (4) xXxx (5) XxXx
Xx (6) X (7) Xx (8) X.

While it is, in theory, not impossible for a combination of units (6), (7) and (8) to form a three-stress variation on (5), the syntactic disruptiveness of such a combination renders its variational effectiveness rather doubtful. However, a complete lack of syntax need not result in a metrical disaster, if other poetic features can produce a stress structure which suggests the regularity of a metrical pattern. For instance, in the poem "Talk War" by Albie Ollivierre, lineation and lexical repetition give the impression of an iambic, or trochaic, monometer whose rigidity is only varied by an occasional disyllable among the rhythmic sameness of monosyllabic uniformity:

Talk War
War love
Love touch
Touch peace
Peace beat
Beat slip
Slip waste (ll. 1-7)

The poem continues in this manner for another 30 lines. Its want of syntactic continuity can rhythmically be compensated only by a clear, though artificial, linear stress metre. The question whether such poetry should carry the label of free verse, remains, however, undecided: for the syntactically free distribution of words in the above example is curbed by the possibility of a regular metrical stress pattern.

Although syntax furnishes almost invariably the principal footing of structural metrics, its patterns may be rivalled or complemented by lineation. Thus, Hilde Domin writes in lines 18 to 19 of her poem "Vor Tag":

Und doch, als du fort warst,
der zärtliche Zweifel.

Here, the metrical force of the linear stress structure is likely to prevail over the syntactic separateness of the temporal subclause, "als du fort warst," in order to yield a rhythmically effective repetition:

(1) ^{a} xX|^{b} xxXx
(2) xXxxXx.

Owing to the syntactic boundary in unit (1), and the possibility of rendering (1b) in isolation a regular falling repetitive pattern (XxXx), we may regard unit (2) as a metrical *variation*, rather than repetition, of (1).[179] In this case, lineation is metrically more important than syntax because the syntactic grouping fails to provide stress patterns of good variational gestalt. However, if the syntactic basis is metrically sound

[179] Repetition is, in fact, but a special form of variation.

but ambiguous, lineation may assume the role of a metrical arbitrator. A simple sentence, like "Da war ich noch ganz", for example, can be metricized in two ways - (1) xXxxX, or (2) XxXxX - both of which are equally acceptable. The following linear arrangement of that same sentence by Paul Celan in "Als uns das Weiße anfiel", ll. 7-9, clearly favours the second variant, because the linear isolation of "Da" suggests an emphasis on that word, which is best expressed by metrical accentuation:

Da	(2) X
war ich	xX
noch ganz.	xX.

On the other hand, a two-line rendering, with the linear division after the verb ("war"), would prefer the first metrical variant. We see, at any rate, that it is by all means worthwhile to discuss the metrical possibilities of lineation in free verse.

Although, in general, the stress pattern of a metrical unit remains unaffected by the occurrence of a metrical line boundary, lineation may disambiguate uncertain accentual structures, or permit of an emphatic metrical shape which it would have been hard to obtain without linear support. A line boundary that separates the two elements of a compound word, for example, will emphasize the significance of both components, even if this would necessitate a clash of metrical stresses. Paul Celan's poem "Mit den Verfolgten" makes ample use of the above device:

Das Morgen-Lot, übergoldet,
heftet sich dir an die mit-
schwörende, mit-
schürfende, mit-
schreibende
Ferse. (ll. 5-10)

We metricize:

(1) xXxXxxXx
(2) XxxXxxX
XxxX
XxxX
Xxx
Xx.

Note that, here, the postmodifying adjective in line 5 is not considered a separate metrical unit but an integral part of the subject, because the resulting three-stress pattern in (1) anticipates with its double non-stress the metrical characteristic of the accentual structure in (2). This anticipation would probably be of a different kind, if we changed the lineation:

Das Morgen-Lot, übergoldet,
heftet sich dir an die mitschwörende,
mitschürfende, mitschreibende Ferse.

In this case, the avoidance of stress clashes within metrical units would affect the pattern as a whole and tend towards the following accentual structure:

(1) xXxX (2) XxXx
(3) XxXxXxXxXx
XxXxXxXxXx.

The metrical alignment of the lexical stress patterns in "mitschwörende", "mitschürfende", "mitschreibende" through promotion of the third syllable is an artificiality which Paul Celan's lineation avoids without incurring any metrical disadvantage.

A similar effect can be observed in lines 3 to 5 of "Bowled Over" by Ted Hughes:

[....] world cannot
Ever be harder or clearer or come
Closer than when it arrived there

Here, the metrical pattern of "or come/ Closer" is crucially important. Should we opt for a symmetrical two-stress clash unit, or choose a regular falling repetition? Both possibilities are metrically viable:

either (1) Xxx	or (2) Xxx
XxxXxxXx|xX	XxxXxxXx|Xx
Xx|xXxxXx,	Xx|xXxxXx.

A disruption of the rolling triple rhythm is inevitable; yet, while the half-hearted frustration of our rhythmic expectation in the second variant leaves us stumbling over metrical detritus for at least two syllables ("or come"), the rhythmic gap in version (1) at the end of line 4 stops the pressing pace of metre for a short moment, before the accentual triplets resume their waltz-like effectiveness. In this way, lineation and metre may even in free verse be closely related. Furthermore, the metrical interpretation in (1) also affects our view of syntax and semantics, for the verb "come" maintains a temporary independence of its postmodification ("closer") if the linear boundary between them is reinforced by metre. The metrical gap signals an ostensible syntactic boundary, and thus enables the verbal meaning at the end of the line to acquire a certain self-sufficient significance, before the next line qualifies what the previous has established semantically as well as syntactically. These linear effects, it is true, might equally be regarded as universally applicable, irrespective of metrical considerations; we argue, however, that metre can tip the scales of linear relevance, if syntax and semantics leave some scope for alternative readings.

Lineation may even supersede syntax as the basis of metrical grouping, provided that the number of stresses per line reveals a tendency to be constant. This tendency is in some poems more easily ascertained than in others. Take, for example, "In Cemeteries" by D.J. Enright:

This world a vale of soul-making -
To what intent the finished wares?

Is the ore enforced and fired through
Harsh mills, only to fall aside?

Who is this soulmaster? What say
Do souls have in their made futures?

We mourn the untried young, unmade
In small coffins. What of grown graves?

At times in cemeteries, you hear
Their voices, sad and even-toned,

Almost see the made souls, in their
Curious glory. If you are old.

We have no difficulty in locating four metrical stresses in each line since the number of syllables per line is eight, almost throughout the whole poem. (Line 3 with nine syllables remains the only exception, if we take "cemeteries" in line 9 to be trisyllabic, and "Curious" in the last line to be disyllabic.) The intralinear distribution of accents in a natural test reading is, however, highly variable: while lines 2, 7, 9, and 10 readily lend themselves to the stress pattern of an iambic tetrameter, all other lines remain to some degree resistant to a smooth fitting of this metrical straitjacket. To operate nonetheless with the template of a tetrameter, would necessitate too many accentual adjustments for the metrical pattern to become rhythmically compelling. Yet, although the dominant deviation from the standard metre disallows the four-beat line to create the typical effect of a four-beat rhythm, we are bound to acknowledge that the constant number of stresses per line constitutes the foremost metrical principle of the poem. If we agree, moreover, that the regular number of syllables per line favours a syllabo-tonic rather than a pure stress metre; then, there is not much scope left for the application of structural metrics. The poem by D.J. Enright furnishes a good example of metrical unresolvedness; for it is too irregular in its stress patterns to be rhythmically successful in adapting to the rigidity of an iambic tetrameter, but, at the same time, it is also too regular in its number of stresses and syllables per line to ignore the obvious function of the line as a metrical unit and develop a syntax-based structural metre.

While it remains doubtful whether a poem whose metre is fully controlled by lineation can still be regarded as free verse, there is no questioning the possibility of regular four-beat patterns - which are habitually associated with linear syllabo-tonic metres - to occur as part of the metrical structure of a free verse poem. A syntactic unit must form the basis of such a four-beat pattern, which may occasionally be reinforced by lineation. Furthermore, it should be remembered that the rhythm of a four-beat pattern can be realized either by a four-stress structure, or by three stresses and a silent beat. Thus, the accentual patterns in the following example - lines 1 to 4 of "Rapunzel" by Maureen Duffy - can without difficulty be rhythmized in a way that renders them a trochaic variant of Poulter's Measure in which the stress structure of the long line is repeated with an initial upbeat:

I came to her tower in the evening (A)
With the trembling breath of darkness
Soft upon my cheek. The long bright ladder
Of her hair she tumbled to my feet.

To demonstrate its possible rhythmic effect, we re-write the original passage, with an asterisk indicating the medial caesura in each metrical line:

I came to her tower * in the evening (B)
With the trembling breath of darkness * soft upon my cheek.
The long bright ladder of her hair * she tumbled to my feet.

For the approximation of a Poulter's Measure[180], we metricize:

XxXxXx * XxXxX[181] (B)
XxXxXxXx * XxXxX
xXxXxXxX * xXxXxX.

Compare now a possible analysis based on structural metrics:

(1) xXxxX|xxXx (A)
(2) xxXxXxXx|
XxXxX (3) xXxXx
XxX|xXxXxX.

As the patterns develop, the alternation between stresses and non-stresses becomes more and more regular, and urges the necessity of accepting in the last sentence, at the latest, an accentual structure which is identical to that of the long line in Poulter's Measure. It is on the grounds of this final metrical regularity that we may adjust the previous patterns for the purpose of enhancing rhythmical smoothness. How well the effects of Poulter's measure are experienced in these few lines, can easily be shown in a corresponding test reading. Only because of the equivalent four-beat patterns in lines 2 and 3 of lineation (B) - in each line, a four-stress structure is followed by a three-stress structure - do we feel with such forcefulness the rhymelike effect of the

[180] Albeit the name "Poulter's Measure" implies syllabic regularity, the rhythmic effect of this metre would not be impaired by minor syllabic deviations. George Gascoigne (in Smith 1904: 56) writes:

> The commonest sort of verse which we vse now adayes (*viz.* the long verse of twelve and fourtene sillables) I know not certainly howe to name it, vnlesse I should say that it doth consist of Poulters measure, which giueth xii. for one dozen and xiiij. for another.

[181] It must be conceded that this metrication of the first line feels highly strained in a free verse context. To render "evening" a trisyllable requires at least the metrical stimulus of a Poulter's Measure; for even poetic usage confines the word most commonly to two syllables. However, a clear example of *evening*-trisyllabicity can be found in Keats' "The Eve of St. Agnes", 18.4. Here is the whole (Spenserian) stanza:

> 'Ah, why wilt thou affright a feeble soul?
> A poor, weak, palsy-stricken, churchyard thing,
> Whose passing-bell may ere the midnight toll!
> Whose prayers for thee, each morn and evening,
> Were never missed.' Thus plaining doth she bring
> A gentler speech from burning Porphyro,
> So woeful, and of such deep sorrowing,
> That Angela gives promise she will do
> Whatever he shall wish, betide her weal or woe.

Both rhyme and metre leave no doubt that the word "evening" consists of three syllables.

The other noun, "tower", in the first line of Maureen Duffy's poem is also capable of adjusting the number of its syllables according to metrical preference: while a rhythmic four-beat interpretation favours disyllabicity, the possible good gestalt of line 1 asks, in a structural analysis, for a monosyllabic contraction of the word. (See the metrication below.)

strong assonance between “cheek” and “feet”. And if we accept a double four-beat rhythm of two three-stress structures in line 1, who will not be checked by an inward desire to substitute “chin” for “cheek” in order to fulfill the expectations of rhyme stirred up by the metrical pattern? All the above considerations about Poulter’s Measure in free verse are in no way binding; yet, they offer interesting insights into the metro-rhythmical potential of a poem in that they reveal the extent to which an apparently “free” stress pattern may be influenced by conventional rules of metre.

The efficacy of a four-beat rhythm is increased when the alternation of stress and non-stress permits of a further differentiation between alternating stronger and weaker stresses, so that the binary metrical basis becomes part of a ternary stress structure. These so-called dipodic rhythms are occasionally evoked even by the accentual patterns of free verse. In “Cadenza” by Ted Hughes, for example, line 4 is rhythmically conspicuous for the regularity of stress undulation in its genitive postmodifier:

The full, bared throat of a woman walking water

The second part of this syntactic phrase, “of a woman walking water”, can likewise be metricized as (1) XxXx|XxXx or (2) xxXx|xxXx. It is because of the equal flexibility of the first and fifth syllables to function either as metrical stresses, or as metrical non-stresses, that we recognize them as stronger than the adjacent non-stresses, but weaker than the nominal main stresses. The rhythmical impact of this dipodic pattern has repercussions on the metrical analysis of the first part. Depending on whether we accept pattern (1) or pattern (2) for the genitive modifier, we will have to metricize the whole line as (1) ^{a} xXXX|^{b} XxXx|^{c} XxXx or (2) ^{a} xXxX|^{b} xxXx|^{c} xxXx, respectively. Interestingly, the rhythmic power, here, is sufficient to quell the significance of good shape: thus, we would curb the metrical potential and mar the linear rhythm, if we were to combine the rising repetition of (2a) with the similarly ideal patterns of (1bc). Good rhythmization and good gestalt usually go hand in hand; yet, whenever they disagree, the former is metrically more important than the latter.

A dynamic pattern in which the number of non-stresses between stresses increases or decreases gradually from one to three, or from three to one, respectively, is rhythmically noticeable for its *stringendo* or *ritardando* effect, while its gestalt is governed by an internal principle of predictable stress variation. These, as it were, rhopalic patterns[182] are not particularly frequent in free verse, but they do occur. Take, for instance, the last line in Walt Whitman’s poem “From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird”, which runs:

And then the song of each member of these states.

This phrase functions as a direct object and constitutes a metro-syntactic unit of the pattern (1) xXxXxxXxxxX. Its rhythmical effect at the end of a short poem is like the flourish that finishes off the song of the chaffinch. Yet, we should not fail to see that syntax counterpoints the straightforwardness of this metrical intensification by suggesting four possible monostress subunits: (1) ^{a} xX|^{b} xX|^{c} xxXx|^{d} xxX. The variation in these patterns is evident, and the syntactic boundary between (1c) and

[182] Note that these rhopalic patterns should not be confused with a rhopalic metre, which is characterized by a gradual change in the number of syllables per word.

(1d) can only be regarded as slightly disruptive of the rhopalic effect in (1) as a whole. Structural metre once again betrays an interpretative flexibility which results in the final presentation of a metrical potential rather than one definitive stress structure.

The extent of the metrical potential determines the freedom of free verse in that a conflicting relationship between the various contributory elements leaves more argumentative scope for the stress patterns of a structural metre than does a mutual relationship dominated by metrical unanimity. While syntax usually outlines fairly unambiguously the grouping structures of metrical units, lexical stressing provides the kind of pliability necessary to permit of adaptations to a rhythmically more effective pattern gestalt. In most cases, the influence of a contextual good shape does not go beyond the metrical promotion or demotion of syllables within the limits of the relative stress principle. That is to say, the metrical stress pattern of a polysyllable is likely to correspond to its lexical stress pattern. We may, however, allow for exceptions to this rule, if the metrical environment appears to be strong enough to force an opposing lexical accentuation into conformity with a regular metrical stress pattern:

> it is you it equals you any fool has to pity you
> so parcel up the whole issue [....]

These two lines (ll. 14-15) from Samuel Beckett's "Ooftish" are most effectively metricized,

> (1) XxX|xXxX (2)XxXxxXxX
> (3) xXxXxXxX.

Here, the inversion of the lexical stress pattern in "issue" is urged not only by the compelling variational structure, but also, and in particular, by the rhyme at the end of each metrical unit. However, if the contextual forces of metre fail to convey a rhythmic impression strong enough to overrun any obstinate lexical stress patterns, the recalcitrant word will be metrically exposed and, therefore, semantically emphasized. This is the case in line 4 of Whitman's "From Paumanok starting I fly like a bird":

> To Kanada till I absorb Kanada in myself [....]

We regard this part of the line as one metrical unit since the syntactic boundary after the second word is smoothed away in the rhythmic flow of the possible metrical regularity in the first eight syllables, xXxxXxxX.[183] While the stress pattern of the final phrase, "in myself" (xxX), would be a perfect continuation of these triple rhythms, the preceding repetition of "Kanada" (Xxx) sounds a jarring accentual chord within the surrounding metrical harmony. This discordant emphasis sanctions as a poetic device the otherwise monotonous repeat of a word which could easily have been replaced by a pronoun.

Polysyllables tend to be problematic in free verse, for they often cause metro-rhythmical friction. If their natural lexical stress patterns contradict the accentual alternations of an ideal structural metre, the solution consists usually in a compromise

[183] Furthermore, the rhythmic structure of the poem as a whole would not favour smaller metrical units.

that levels all minor differences of syllabic prominence and focuses on main-stress rhythmization. Thus, the noun phrase in line 21 of Friederike Mayröcker's "Text mit Erdteilen" is best regarded as a metrical unit with internal monostress variation of its lexical constituents:

grazile schmalnasige kalifornische Schönheit
(1) xXx/Xxxx/xxXxx/Xx.

It is clear that the stress patterns of the second and third word result from a fast test reading; for "schmalnasige" and "kalifornische" might, in a different metrical context, acquire two or even three stresses rather than pivoting only on their main lexical accent. The above metrication requires that isochronous rhythmization compensates for the structural oddity of five non-stresses in a row. Another example of metrical complication through polysyllables is provided in the first stanza of Erich Fried's poem "Die Sprecher":

Wer immer von seiner
Freigebigkeit spricht
ist ein Geizhals

Owing to the significance of lineation in this poem, the line functions as metrical unit. We metricize:

(1) xXxxXx
(2) XxxxX
(3) xxXx.

A promotion of the medial syllable in the second unit would not only run counter to the lexical stress pattern of "Freigebigkeit", where the last syllable is more prominent than the penultimate syllable; but it would also spoil the two-stress variation in (2) of the first line. Note that the syntactic cohesion of the whole stanza is likely to render the third line but a monostress unit rather than another two-stress variation, because an initial stress in line 3 would produce an accentual clash between (2) and (3).

The lexical stress pattern of a polysyllable may, in the process of establishing a structural metre, even be influenced by features of phrasal accent. While, usually, the intonational undulations - determined as they are by word order and semantic implications - do not affect any intralexical stress distribution, they may nonetheless facilitate a metrical decision by favouring one particular stress pattern more than another. Consider the following extract (ll. 31-34) from Peter Härtling's poem "Marilyn Monroe":

Als du nur einen suchtest,
den Hörer abnahmst,
wähltest, wen wähltest?
schwiegen sie.

We metricize:

(1) xXxXxXx

(2) xXxXx
(3) XxXxX
(4) XxX.

Here, the metrical pattern in unit (3) inverts the lexical stress pattern of "wählte**st**" at the end of the line in order to achieve a good variational gestalt. Although the inversion of a lexical stress pattern is among the crudest steps to be taken in the establishment of a structural metre, its impact is, in this case, much softened by the strong phrasal stress on the interrogative pronoun ("wen") and, to a lesser degree, by the rising intonation which a grammatical question facilitates. To raise the pitch at the end of the line is to increase the effect of an important stress feature, and, thereby, to make possible the assignment of metrical stress to the final, lexically unstressed syllable. The ensuing metrical demotion of the preceding syllable, however, depends on the contextual dominance of a phrasal stress which renders the repetition of the verb semantically redundant and thus minimizes the metro-rhythmic significance of its lexical stress.

The general metrical obstinacy of polysyllabic lexical stress patterns contrasts with the relative structural flexibility of monosyllables. Thus, a monosyllabic noun is not infrequently deprived of its right to attract metrical stress, if the contextual circumstances prefer a non-stress in its position:

Who, in the public library, one evening after rain,
amongst the polished tables and linoleum,
stands bored under blank light to glance at these pages?

The following metrical stress pattern seems to us most suitable for these opening lines of "Public Library" by Dannie Abse:

(1) X (2) xxXxXxX (3)xXxXxX
(4) xXxXxXx (5) XxXxX
(6)xXxxXx (7) xXxxXx.

While the accentuation in units (1) to (5) is fairly straightforward, with a few metrical promotions having to be justified by the relative stress principle; the repetitive pattern in the third line is possible only if we sacrifice the lexical stress of the noun "light" to the requirements of good gestalt by subordinating it metrically to the adjacent metro-lexical stress in the preceding adjective. This metrical pattern in units (6) and (7) is indifferent to the intonational rise at the end of line 3, because of the stable repetitive structure. Yet, only a slight alteration could render a metrication feasible in which the interrogative intonation would help to invert metrically the lexical stress pattern of "pages":

stands bored in yon blank light to glance at these pages?
(6) xXxXxX (7) xXxXxX.

Note that the change in this construct demonstrates once again the metrical flexibility of the monosyllabic adjective and noun in (6). The most interesting verbal patterns are, however, those in which the same word occurs both in a metrically stressed and

metrically unstressed position. Take, for example, line 12 of Samuel Beckett's "Malacoda":

must it be it must be it must be
(1) [a] XxX|[b] xXx|[c] XxX.

Each one of the three different monosyllables conforms naturally to the regular alternation of the metrical stress pattern without being strained by their accentual ambivalence throughout the line. These metrical variations on lexical stress have semantic implications in that each metrical subunit conveys with the same words a different attitudinal meaning: thus, the word order in (1a) produces a doubtful, interrogative tone, followed by an imperative command in (1b), and an expression of obedient resignation in (1c). In particular, the two latter subunits show to what extent a metrical change may entail changes in meaning.

The semantic aspects of a syntactic phrase cannot always be easily brought into line with a well-shaped metrical stress pattern. If the meanings of a monosyllabic noun and its preceding monosyllabic modifier appear to be equally important, and if their metrical environment fails to provide sufficient structural support; then, the occurrence of a metrically unfavourable stress clash is likely to be unavoidable. In the following quotation from the *Pater Noster* of Maureen Duffy's "Missa Humana", there is no satisfactory solution to the metrical accommodation of lexical stresses:

Climb upward on his bent head (l. 6)

A natural test reading would yield a metrically irregular stress pattern:

(1) xXx (2) xxXX.

We may regularize, it is true, the combination of units (1) and (2) by conceding an additional accent on the preposition ("on"); yet, the metrical stumbling-block at the end of the line will probably have to remain unchanged for want of a practicable handle to demote either noun or adjective. The semantic strength of the noun ("head") and its contextual position ask for an unconditional metrical stress, which not even the prospect of good continuation and a regular pattern can turn into a metrical non-stress - for example, (1) xXx (2) XxXx.[184] Yet, also the adjectival meaning appears to be too significant to be metrically represented by a non-stress, as it seems doubtful whether the relative stress principle - which would assign to the adjective "bent" a slightly lesser lexical stress than to the noun "head" - is sufficiently influential to maintain in metre the accentual difference between the two monosyllables. Both options that leave the adjective metrically unstressed - (1) xXx (2) XxxX, and (1) xXx (2)xXxX - are not particularly motivated by the metrical context.[185] The only argument that can be put forward in favour of these patterns is the good gestalt in the second unit of

[184] Compare, however, the following construct, where the metrical demotion of the nominal stress is not only justified, but required by the context:

Climb upward on his bent head drooping
(1) xXx (2) XxXxXx.

[185] Once again, a construct may demonstrate how a slight change can provide sufficient metrical motivation for the adjective to go unstressed:

Climb again on his bent head
(1) XxX (2) xXxX.

each alternative. It is, however, not the task of this theory to judge, in ultimately disputable cases, between the suitability of a semantically forced improvement of metrical stress alternation and the propriety of a naturally awkward metrication. To point out the metro-rhythmical discomfiture caused by the irregularity and unruliness of the lexical stress patterns within a syntactic unit, is to reflect much more effectively the weak and ambiguous rhythmic character of the syntactic unit in question than would a clear decision in favour of a seemingly straightforward metrication.

The above exemplification has given a first practical insight into the approximate range of problems and complications with which a structural metrist is likely to be confronted. Yet, despite these rather complex rational considerations, we maintain that the establishment of a structural metre is, on the whole, a straightforward intuitive process based on an emotional penetration of the rhythmic possibilities latent in the stress patterns of language. Usually, the criteria of metrication - the factors of good gestalt and rhythmizability on the one hand, and the various aspects of linguistic unwieldiness on the other - mould the poetic material quasi-automatically into one more or less harmonious metrical structure. Our keen and conscious awareness of the principles of a structural metre is only then of crucial importance if the natural rhythmic tendencies of the poetic language conflict strongly with any desirable metrical paradigm. In an ideal structural metre, the lexical stresses are so distributed within clear syntactic units that they form regular patterns void of accentual clashes, and the syntactic units are so patterned that they combine into an effective variational sequence. While such a smooth metrication tends to produce one almost incontestable stress structure, a more obstructive process of metrical formation becomes in itself characteristic of the rhythmic quality of a free verse poem by presenting several equally acceptable patterns as the metrical potential of the text. With these final remarks on the establishment of a structural metre, we are now in a position to demonstrate the usefulness of our metrical theory by applying its principles to complete poems.

4.4. Applications

The metrical analysis of a free verse poem should reflect the rhythm of that poem both in terms of accentual micro-patterns and in terms of a variational macro-structure, for the overall rhythmic power inherent in the poetic undulations of lexical stress hinges upon good metrical gestalt as well as effective variation. Thus, while a compelling sequence of well-shaped stress patterns is certainly the most preferable of combinatory alternatives, the combination of a regular metrical shape with an irregular metrical shape tends to be rhythmically inferior to the structural continuity between equal or similar patterns of ill shape. We will not be able to make any definitive comments about the rhythmic effectiveness of a metrical stress pattern, unless we examine this pattern within its structural context. In other words, the accentual micro-structure of a metrical unit depends for its rhythmic fruitfulness on the variational macro-structure of pattern combination. This macro-structure represents not only one mosaic of elementary metrical units, but - like a house which is made of bricks that constitute its walls - the comprehensive metrication of a free verse poem produces also intermediate structural stages in which several *groups* of metrical units can be distinguished from one another on account of their different accentual and variational characteristics. We should, however, point out that the

impression generated by such a thorough metrical structure is not a primarily rhythmic impression, as it is not *immediately* evoked by the alternating stress patterns of metre. The metrical superstructure of a poem is rhythmically relevant only insofar as it is indirectly symptomatic of the underlying accentual regularity: while a multilayered hierarchy of stress patterns presupposes a distinctive structural homogeneity within metrical units and their groupings, a structure which remains unsegmented above the level of the metrical unit is likely to indicate either repetitional and variational continuity throughout the whole poem, or extreme discontinuity between adjacent stress patterns. The following metrical analyses will display some of the structural possibilities in free verse metrics.

Metrical analysis I: "The Gulf" by Katherine Mansfield

A gulf of silence separates us from each other.
I stand at one side of the gulf, you at the other.
I cannot see you or hear you, yet know that you are there.
Often I call you by your childish name
And pretend that the echo to my crying is your voice.
How can we bridge the gulf? Never by speech or touch.
Once I thought we might fill it quite up with tears.
Now I want to shatter it with our laughter.

Metrication:

(1) ^{a} xXxXxXxXx|^{b} XxXx
(2) ^{a} XxxXxXxX|^{b} XxxXx
(3) ^{a} XxxXxxXx|^{b} xXxXxX
(4) ^{a} XxxXx|^{b} xxXxX
(5) ^{a} xxX|^{b} xxXx|^{c} xxXx|^{d} xxX
(6) ^{a} XxxXxX|^{b} XxxXxX
(7) ^{a} XxX|^{b} xxXxxX|^{c} xX
(8) ^{a} XxX|^{b} xXxX|^{c} xxXx.

Critical discussion of equivocal issues:

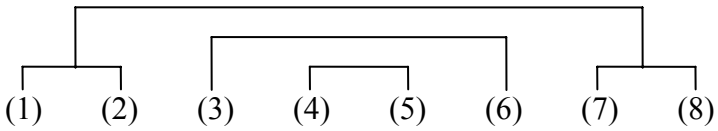
Unit (2): the metrication, here, follows a natural test reading in which the semantic contrast between the two pronouns ("I" and "you") attracts metrical stress on the first syllables of (2a) and (2b), respectively, and thereby produces a stress clash that reflects the meaning of "gulf". This argument in favour of a less regular stress alternation in (2) is too strong to be brushed aside for the otherwise straightforward possibility of rendering unit (2) as a metrical repetition of unit (1).
Unit (3): the first subunit, (3a), could also be rendered with metrical stress on the second syllable and metrical non-stress on the first. While this version would be slightly more natural, the above pattern is slightly more regular. Both possibilities must be regarded as equally appropriate, since neither of them can be said to combine less effectively than the other with the subsequent subunit of (3b).
Unit (4): although this unit could easily be recognized as an iambic pentameter, we prefer, in the given metrical context, to establish a pattern with only four stresses.

Unit (5): to acknowledge the relative weight of the syntactic boundary between the finite verb and its dependent *that*-clause, one might argue in favour of an eight-stress unit, (5) XxX|XxXxXxXxXxX. Yet, for variational reasons, the more natural four-stress pattern prevails - as we will see later - over a metrication with eight stresses.
Unit (6): the context of (6b) renders a more regular pattern in (6a) - xXxXxX - less advantageous.
Unit (8): slightly less favourable seem to us those alternative five-stress variants which assign metrical accent to the preposition, "with", instead of emphasizing the direct object, "it", and treat optionally the possessive pronoun, "our", as a disyllable rather than a monosyllable. It will be shown that, compared to patterns such as (8) XxX|xXxx|XxXx, or (8) XxX|xXxx|XxxXx, the stress structure proposed in the metrication above can boast minor contextual preferences.

Metrical superstructure:

Unit (1) combines with unit (2), owing to their good variational stress pattern. Unit (3) could be regarded as a six-stress variation of the previous unit; yet, we should not group it with (1) and (2), because these are detached by their identical end rhyme ("other"), and because unit (3) is somewhat self-contained in its internal three-stress variation between (3a) and (3b). Units (4) and (5) go together for their syntactic connectedness and four-stress variation. Here, the shift from an internal two-stress variation in (4) to an internal monostress variation in (5) provides an additional syntactic device of variational regularization. Unit (6) resembles unit (3) in that it also constitutes a metrically independent six-stress pattern which is characterized by internal three-stress variation.[186] Finally, units (7) and (8) can be grouped together on account of their five-stress variation. It is worth noting that the accentual patterns of the subunits in (8) correspond to the accentual patterns of the subunits in (7), provided that we assign metrical stress in unit (8) to the direct object, "it", and not to the preposition, "with": if that is the case, (7a) equals (8a); (7b) and (8b) resemble each other as rising two-stress repetitions; and (7c) and (8c) are both monostress subunits. The metrical superstructure in Katherine Mansfield's poem can, thus, be described in terms of its linear metrical units as a structural frame in which the first two lines and the last two lines encompass four medial lines of internal metrical variation whose interrelational organization continues the framing structure of the whole in that the metre of lines 3 and 6 can be said to embrace the metrical patterns of lines 4 and 5. We may formalize the description of this superstructure by revealing in a diagram the variational links between metrical units throughout the poem:

[186] It is only due to the linear metrical context that we regard line 6 as one subdivided unit rather than two metrical units.



What now remains to be investigated is the extent to which the metrical superstructure relates to the development of poetical meaning. The first two lines give a situational account of the starting position, before line 3 specifies the unalterable circumstances of that position. In the next two units, lines 4 and 5, the previous specification is exemplified by a vain attempt to change the initial situation. Line 6, rather than continuing the exemplification in the two previous units, refers back to line 3 in that its question originates in a desire to overcome the semantic denial in the statement of unit (3). The answer is predictable, the question becomes a rhetorical question. And the final units, lines 7 and 8, make clear that not even time ("Once [....]/ Now [....]") can remedy the spatial discrepancy presented in the initial metaphor of the first two lines. This interpretation of "The Gulf" reveals, then, a complete accordance between the metrical superstructure of the poem and its semantic patterns.

Metrical analysis II: "Unter die Haut" by Paul Celan

Unter die Haut meiner Hände genäht:
dein mit Händen
getrösteter Name.

Wenn ich den Klumpen Luft
knete, unsere Nahrung,
säuert ihn der
Buchstabenschimmer aus
der wahnwitzig-offenen
Pore.

Metrication:

(1) XxxXxxXxxX:
(2) XxXx
xXxxXx

(3) XxxXxX
Xx (4) XxxXx
(5) XxXx
XxxXx (6) X
xXxxXxx
Xx.

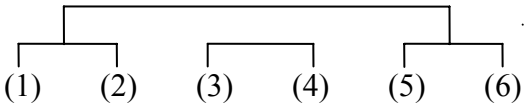
Critical discussion of equivocal issues:

Unit (2): alternatively, we could opt for metrical non-stress in the first syllable. The resulting stress pattern, (2) xxXxxXxxXx, would emphasize - perhaps, unduly - the continuity between unit (1) and unit (2), and smooth away the syntactic boundary at the end of the first line.
Unit (3): less natural, but not impossible, would be a metrical stress on the pronoun, "ich", rather than on the initial conjunction, "Wenn". The resulting linear regularity would, however, not affect the stress clash within the unit. In this context, we have no

semantic or metrical handle to demote any of the two lexical stresses on "Luft" and "knete" for the purpose of a better gestalt. Our desire to regularize the stress pattern into (3) XxxXxxXx, or (3) XxxXxXxx, or even (3) xXxXxXxX, is greatly diminished by the metrical influence of lineation: to insert at least a linear break where syntax necessitates a clash of stresses can be regarded as a common device in Paul Celan's poetry.
Unit (6): as in unit (2), it is questionable whether the first syllable should receive metrical stress or rather remain unstressed. Not to assign metrical stress to the preposition, "aus", would blur the admittedly weak syntactic boundary between units (5) and (6), and support their combination. Yet, the resulting sequence of three non-stresses in the combined stress patterns of (5) and (6) may, perhaps, be regarded as slightly unfavourable to the non-stress option for the first syllable of unit (6).

Metrical superstructure:

Units (1) and (2) are grouped together not only for their four-stress variation, but also because of the syntactic link between them, and because of their visual detachment from the rest of the poem. If we chose the three-stress variant for unit (2), the grouping of (1) and (2) would be metrically based on a four-beat rhythm with a silent beat signifying closure at the end of the second unit. This possibility of a metro-rhythmic closure marking a principal boundary in the overall structure of metre serves as a major *metrical* feature to detach the first two units from the four-stress pattern of unit (3). Another distinctive characteristic is the variational effectiveness of the similarity between the accentual patterns in (1) and (2), whose regularity contrasts with the irregular stress structure in (3). The third unit, then, can be grouped with unit (4), not so much because the latter repeats the opening pattern of the former, but on account of the three-stress variation in the *linear* stress structure. For not only does lineation soften the metrical awkwardness of the stress clash in unit (3), but, conversely, it is also influenced by the two consecutive stresses in that the resulting equivalent of a metrical pause at the end of line 4 reinforces the possible metrical significance of lineation. Yet, to abandon the syntactic basis of metre and to take lines 4 and 5 as metrical units would seem to be a doubtful, though not altogether inconceivable, interpretation of the metro-rhythmic structure in the poetic passage under discussion. Finally, units (5) and (6) are metrically related in the same way as units (1) and (2): they are linked by four-stress variation; or, optionally, by a four-beat rhythm with a silent beat at the end if we consider unit (6) to feature only three metrical stresses. This grouping structure is also syntactically confirmed, for the main clause of (5) and (6) contrasts with the subclause of (3) and (4). Thus, we can depict the metrical superstructure of the poem as follows:



This structural patterning reflects the emergence of meaning: the hovering metrical conflict in lines 4 and 5 between lineation and syntax parallels the semantic uncertainty implied by a temporal-conditional subclause ("Wenn ich ....")[187]; and,

[187] The context does not define the nature of the subclause beyond the alternative limitations of time or condition, since it is not clear if the act of kneading a lump of air is subject to a volitional decision whether to carry out the task at all; or if it is being done with certainty, but at some unspecified time.

moreover, the connection between the first two metrical units and the last two metrical units echoes the semantic relationship between their respective lexical meanings. The words “Haut”, “Hände”, “Name”, at the start of the poem point to their semantic associates, “Buchstabenschimmer” and “Pore”, towards the end; whereas the medial sourdough vocabulary - “Klumpen”, “knete”, “Nahrung” - is, in its function as a mere imaginative vehicle, only lightly linked with its structural environment by the associative lexical chain of “Hände”, “knete”, and “säuert”. We conclude, therefore, that, in Paul Celan’s poem “Unter die Haut”, the metrical superstructure goes hand in hand with the structural patterns of syntax and semantics.

Metrical analysis III: “Jailbird” by Vernon Scannell

His plumage is dun,
Talons long but blunt.
His appetite is indiscriminate.
He has no mate and sleeps alone
In a high nest built of brick and steel.
He sings at night
A long song, sad and silent.
He cannot fly.

Metrication:

(1) xXxxX
(2) XxXxX
(3) ^{a} xXxX$|^{b}$ xXxXxX
(4) ^{a} xXxX$|^{b}$ xXxX
(5) ^{a} xXxX$|^{b}$ xxXxX
(6) xXxX
(7) xXxXxXx
(8) xXxX.

Critical discussion of equivocal issues:

Unit (5): the lexical stress pattern does not agree with the above metrication. But the straightforwardly regular undulations of metre in the preceding line can be said to justify their continuation despite the accentual stumbling-block of a natural test reading in (5a). The continuation in (5) of the regularly alternating metrical stress patterns in (4) is also favoured by the weakness of the syntactic boundary which divides the second verb in unit (4) from its postmodification by a prepositional phrase in unit (5). (It should be noted that our decision to distinguish between two different metrical units in lines 4 and 5, where a mere distinction between subunits would better reflect the dominance of syntactic progression, acknowledges the relative metrical significance of lineation in Vernon Scannell’s poem.) Owing to the two-stress patterns in the three metrical subunits of (4a), (4b), and (5a), the subsequent accentual structure of (5b) should be rendered by a two-stress rather than a three-stress pattern. It is obvious that, to this purpose, only the initial participle, “built”, is

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Perhaps, the latter interpretation is to some degree preferable to the former. We should, at any rate, be aware of the fact that the combination of “wenn” plus present tense indicates an event in the future, which by its very nature must needs be at least temporally conditional.

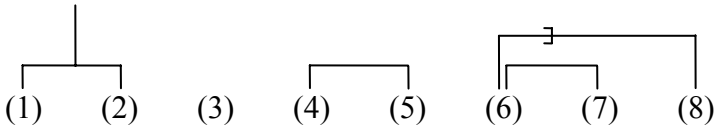
capable of being metrically demoted. If the syntactic structure within unit (5) was metrically subdivided not between the noun head of the prepositional phrase and its postmodifying participle clause, but between the past participle and its genitive postmodification, we might obtain an alternative metrical stress pattern in which the awkward promotion of the indefinite article in (5a) would be replaced by a slightly less awkward demotion of the following noun, "nest": (5) xxXxX|xXxX. However, to opt for this modest harmonization of lexical stressing and metre is to accept a semantically less appropriate subdivision of the line. For the participle, "built", remains practically void of meaning until it is supplemented by the genitive postmodification. And, needless to say, a final metrication that would turn the line into a trochaic pentameter catalectic - (5) XxXxXxXxX - is not approved by the metro-syntactic context.

Unit (7): even more than in line 5, it becomes clear that lineation is responsible for our assessment of the direct object in (7) as a proper metrical unit rather than a subunit. The stress pattern proposed in the above metrication is, however, rivalled by a genuine alternative: (7) xXX|XxXx. This stress structure would not only match the metrical context of two-stress patterns, it would also echo the semantic purport of the line by dint of its heavy-going accentual clashes. Yet, despite these arguments in favour of a metrical analysis which embraces the lexical stressing of a natural test reading, we contend that the quite easily attained regularity of accentual alternation throughout the syntactic entity of units (6) plus (7) is metrically too compelling to be put in the shade by a rhythmically clumsy, though not unfavourable, natural metrication. The demotion of the noun, "song", is not only metrically advocated by the two adjacent stresses, but it is also facilitated semantically in that the verb, "sing", in unit (6) anticipates the nominal meaning in unit (7) and, thus, diminishes the need for syllabic prominence of the noun. A comparison of the two metrical alternatives in line 7 renders both stress patterns equally acceptable, since none of the argumentative issues put forward in favour of either possibility can claim to be *per se* more important than the other.

Metrical superstructure:

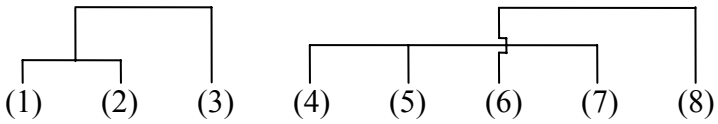
A grouping of the linear metrical units is, in the first place determined by syntactic structures. Thus, the parallel clauses in units (1) and (2) combine into a five-stress pattern, because the second elliptical clause depends for its verb on the first clause. Equal stress number, then, renders unit (3) a metrical variation of the preceding combined patterns, so that units (1) and (2) and unit (3) can be grouped together. Apart from their strong syntactic link, lines 4 and 5 are connected because of their four-stress variation and their internal two-stress subunits. Like an appendix to the previous metrical group, unit (6) features a regular rising two-stress pattern but remains syntactically self-contained, until the next line reveals that the verb in (6) is meant to be transitive rather than intransitive. The close relationship between a verb and its direct object necessitates the grouping of units (6) and (7). Their five-stress pattern looks back to the metrical structures at the beginning of the poem. Yet, owing to its syntactic and linear self-sufficiency, unit (6) remains to a certain degree independent of unit (7), so that its two-stress pattern is free to relate also with the identical stress structure in unit (8). Line 7 is, thus, metrically sandwiched between line 6 and line 8. The above description of the metrical superstructure can be formalized:

(A)



An alternative four-stress reading in line 7 renders that unit a variation of (4) and (5). The metrical superstructure changes correspondingly:

(B)



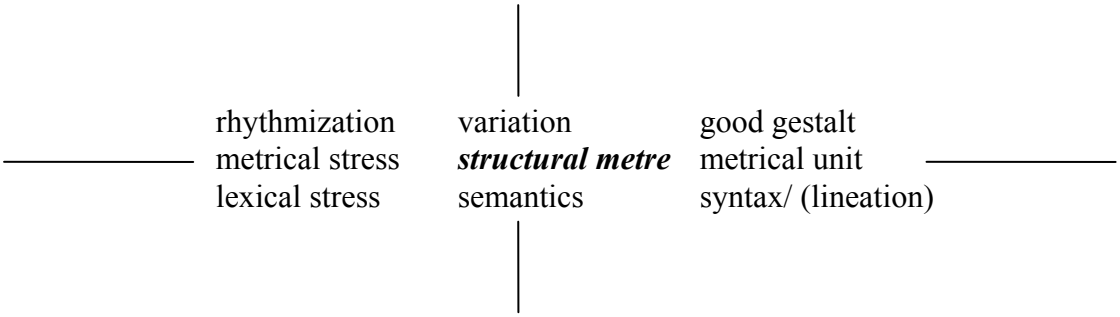
The unrelatedness of units (6) and (7) in this diagram fails to reflect the syntactic dependence of the latter on the former. Yet, sentences are, in Vernon Scannell's "Jailbird", the only structural entity above the metrical unit which may claim to be semantically significant. For the poem means through an almost random accumulation of atomistic statements describing the metaphorical image of the title. If we changed the order of these statements, there would be no change in the poetical message. The alteration would only affect the metrical superstructure and thus bear upon the rhythmic concept of the poem. Consider, for example, an arrangement in which the sequence of metrical units is (1) (2) (6) (7) (3) (4) (5) (8), with (7) being regarded as a three-stress unit. The resulting clear separation of five-stress patterns at the beginning, and four- and two-stress patterns at the end of the poem would contrast rhythmically with the more intertwined metrical superstructure in (A). Thus, the framework of rhythm in Vernon Scannell's poem "Jailbird" is largely characterized by the overall structure of metre, which, however, bears no relevance to the semantic patterning.

The metrical analyses of poems by Katherine Mansfield, Paul Celan, and Vernon Scannell have demonstrated the applicability of structural metrics to free verse. We have seen that it is sometimes difficult to decide whether a syllable should take stress or non-stress, since the simultaneous relevance of several conflicting metrical factors does not always permit of a clear assessment regarding the relative significance of each factor. Sometimes, accepting two different metrications as equally plausible renderings of the underlying rhythmic potential is unavoidable. Owing to the intricate interrelationship between all components of a structural metre, it is possible that the accentual ambiguity of a syllable affects the metrical structure of a whole poem in that one alteration of stress may trigger a chain reaction whereby the accentual structure of a metrical unit is reorganized into a new pattern, which then causes the metrical superstructure to change with regard to its poetical and rhythmical significance: a complex hierarchy of combined stress patterns may, thus, disintegrate into a comparatively simple structure. This shift of the metro-structural frame, it is true, has no effect on the rhythm of any unitary stress pattern, yet, it is likely to impair the rhythmical smoothness of a poem by restricting the possibilities of good variational combination. A metrical superstructure is - as we have seen - not only relevant to the rhythmic potential of poetic language, but it also relates with other structural patterns, notably those of syntax and meaning. We should, however, point out that our selection of examples for the above metrical analyses is limited to ideal free verse poems, in which syntactic distortions and visual quirks are as much avoided as distinct approximations to a regular metre. An ideal free verse poem should not give the impression of having been composed after any meticulous structural preconception - semantics excepted. A poetical device which restricts the elementary linguistic basis of structural metrics (for instance, by eliminating the syntactic

component), will tend to render the application of our theory more difficult. We ask, therefore: to what extent does it make sense to analyse metrically the stress patterns of free verse, and what are the advantages and disadvantages of a structural metre? An attempt to answer these questions will be made in the final part of this chapter.

4.5. Advantages and disadvantages

Before weighing the pros and cons of our metrical theory, we should try to situate it within the context of metrics in general. For this purpose, it is useful to recapitulate in brief the essentials of structural metre. As the name implies, a structural metre is based on structures in that its components establish through their mutual interplay a variational web of metrical stress patterns. While syntax (and lineation) vie with good gestalt for a realizable grouping structure of metrical units, lexical stress and rhythmization determine the accentual pattern within a unit. This struggle between the linguistically natural and the metrically ideal is controlled by two regulating features: variation balances the effects of rhythmization and good gestalt, whereas semantics curbs the flexibility of both syntax and lexical stressing. Free verse metre emerges, then, in the centre of its constitutive aspects:



In this diagram, the vertical line distinguishes between the structural aspects of stressing and grouping, while the horizontal line draws a divide between the modal aspects of ideal and natural patternings. Structural metre forms the neutral focus of the above bisection, since it evolves in the wake of numerous negotiations between its various determinants. If we take into consideration the analytical results of structural metrics, our concept of a free verse metre can be said to refute the argument that a poetic text which is distinguished from a non-poetic text by nothing more than lineation is necessarily unmetrical.

When it comes to comparing the metres of free verse with the metres of traditional verse, we can pinpoint several distinctive characteristics. Most obvious is the pervasive regularity, in traditional verse, of a conventional metrical pattern, which permits of some striking accentual deviations from its prescriptive template, owing to the strong rhythmical force inherent in the recurrent stress features of a metrical set. Fixed numerically within the bounds of lineation, a syllabo-tonic metre dispenses with competitive grouping features and, therefore, concentrates its variational capacity in the dualism of metrical and lexical stress patterns. Free verse, however, cannot rely throughout a poem on any preliminary metrical features in the first few lines; it rather needs constant support from the combined effects of all metrical components for the establishment of a structural metre. The power of metrical self-perpetuation is, for this reason, less pronounced in free verse than in traditional verse. Not the monotonous repetition of one and the same metrical stress pattern, but a

continuous variational change between subsequent accentual structures is characteristic of a structural metre.

At this point in our discussion, it becomes necessary to have a look at the roles played by the various descriptive levels of metre in free verse metrics. While levels S and R - syntactic prose rhythm and realization in performance - denote the same kinds of accentual renderings in traditional verse as in free verse, levels M and MS - metre and metre plus syntactic prose rhythm - require a closer examination with regard to their respective relevance in a structural metre. It will be remembered that, in regular verse, the metrical template, which constitutes the pattern on level M, is generally unalterable throughout the poem even though the lexical stressing may occasionally disagree with the metrical design. Level MS describes the contrapuntal tension between the ideal pattern of metre and its linguistic effectuation. In free verse, however, this straightforward distinction will have to give way to a more complicated definition of level M. There seem to be two interpretative possibilities. Judging from the unalterable ideality of level M in traditional metrics, we could confine this level in structural metrics to the ideal stress patterns of good gestalt and good rhythmization, and consider the actual metrication as a metrical description of level MS. This differentiation is, however, only superficially attractive, since it mistakes the true nature of a free verse metre by ignoring the essential contribution of the variable grouping factors towards the establishment of a metrical pattern. Unlike traditional verse, free verse does not rely on the line as a metrical constant, so that, here, it is impossible to utilize the clear-cut duality between the ideal and the natural characteristics of stress patterning as the exclusive criterion of a comparative analysis on level MS. To metricize the accentual rhythm of a free verse poem involves more complex considerations. Rather than identifying level M with an ill-defined set of metrically ideal stress patterns, we should, on this level, acknowledge the multifactorial nature of a structural metre. We consider, therefore, our free verse metrications to be on a par with level M. The process of establishing a metrical structure reflects, then, only indirectly the comparison on level MS through the struggle between the progressive powers of metrical ideality and the antagonistic forces of linguistic inertia.

Starting from the fact that the metrical patterns of free verse are, owing to their complexity, less regular, and, therefore, less penetrating, than the metrical patterns of traditional verse, we can easily see why a structural metre tends towards analytical ambiguity. Although an ambiguous metrical analysis with its resulting stress pattern potential need not be less illuminating than the unequivocal metre of a conventional poem, it is patent that a rhythmically less captivating metrical structure is prone to effectual insignificance. Only the poetic function insists on the importance of metro-rhythmical features in free verse by conferring interpretative significance on all those linguistic elements which, in non-poetic texts, are generally subordinated to the communicative function of lexical meaning. Thus, in poetry, language becomes *per definitionem* an end in itself so that the semantic aspect of words and phrases can be supposed to have a comparatively lesser share in the overall effect of a poem.[188] While, in traditional verse, the primarily non-semantic features of language attract our attention by dint of their poetic deviation from the linguistic norm (rhyme and regular metre, for example, do not normally occur in non-poetic texts), a departure from

[188] The validity of these observations has been tested by Klaus Weimar (1980: 95-122), who demonstrates by means of interesting experiments how the primarily non-poetic features of language, such as meaning, oppose their assimilation to the poeticalness of poetry.

linguistic standards is not always apparent in free verse, where the poetic alienation from normal language can seldom be attributed to rhythmic characteristics in the first place. The line is the only infallible indicator of poeticalness in free verse. What goes beyond lineation in this respect - that is, semantic intricacy and linguistic condensation - will increase the significance of metre as a poetic feature, provided that any contingent linguistic caprices do not spoil the basis of structural metrics. Conceding this proviso of metrical intactness, we can say that a free verse poem which is characterized as a poem only through lineation signifies less metro-rhythmic interest than a free verse poem in which the language overflows with poetic licences.

The metrical features of a free verse poem are marginalized, if the meaning of that poem becomes too transparent in its intentional drift. Thus, many of Erich Fried's poems are clearly recognized as a mere vehicle for alerting the reader to a deplorable state of affairs within society. Poetic ornamentation is used only sparingly in order not to blur the distinctness of the message; and occasionally, as in the following example, the line can be regarded as the main feature of poeticalness:

> Der Schuß der Polizei
> den die *Frankfurter Rundschau*
> als sie das noch wagte
> genannt hat
> "Hinrichtung auf der Straße"
> hieß offiziell:
> "Gezielter
> polizeilicher Todesschuß" ("Sprachliche Endlösung", ll. 1-8)

The remaining eleven lines, which complete the poem, continue in this stylistic vein. Albeit lineation signifies that the above text depends for its expressiveness also on rhythm and metre, the semantic directness of the poem puts meaning to the fore and thereby drives the less conspicuous metro-rhythmical features back to relative insignificance. Only a regular metre, or a highly effective structural metre, could claim to be as important as the meaning of a semantically straightforward poem.[189] This does not mean, however, that, in the case of semantic dominance, a metrical analysis of free verse is altogether out of place; it merely implies that the stress patterns of a structural metre decrease in their interpretative value as meaning increases - which does not generally exclude their contribution to the overall effect of a free verse poem.

The actual limits of structural metrics lie in the poetic destruction of language, or in a constant approximation of the linear stress patterns to metrical regularity.[190] In the first case, we can distinguish between two different kinds of linguistic undoing: a poem may be composed on the basis of phonemes, morphemes, or lexemes without organizing them syntactically; or it may even neglect the acoustic component of the language in favour of typographic visuality. A list of syntactically unrelated words, for instance, will fail to be metrically successful, unless lineation creates the possibility of regular or variational stress patterns.[191] Alternatively, one could also select long polysyllables in order to render the word or compound a practicable unit

[189] A different kind of semantic straightforwardness can be found in the anecdotal character of some poems by Katherine Mansfield. Here, metre is also only marginally important.
[190] For the latter issue, see the example of D.J. Enright's poem "In Cemeteries", discussed above.
[191] See our discussion of Albie Ollivierre's poem "Talk War", above.

of stuctural metre. While such lexical lists are most likely to be visually and semantically significant, sound poetry uses the acoustic elements of language for the composition of a rhythmic event based on the speaking capacity of the human voice. Syntax is no longer the solid ground on which linguistic rhythm must unfold its variety of forms. For accentual emphasis is spread over the poem by an arbitrary rhythmization which - partly or wholly detached from meaning - does not necessarily heed any occurring lexical stress patterns. A rhythmic structure that comes into existence only in performance, defies its exploration through the tools of structural metrics, because such an exploration presupposes an interrelation between the linguistic givens and their stress-based metrication.

When visuality outstrips acoustics, our metrical theory becomes irrelevant. E.E. Cummings displays in many of his poems a whole range of visual devices: capitalization in the middle of a word, unlexical regrouping of letters, disturbing use of punctuation marks, and spatial organization of the typographic elements. Even if these techniques are used only within narrow limits, they disrupt, by dint of their uncommon deviational effectiveness, the rhythmic flow of linguistic sound to an extent which renders the application of structural metrics either inappropriate or impossible. There are, however, exceptions to this rule. Thus, spaced lineation - as in the projective verse of Charles Olson's *Maximus Poems* - does not constitute an insurmountable obstacle to the applicability of our theory, although it suggests more than conventional lines a delimitation of metrical units which runs counter to the syntactic grouping principles of a structural metre and thereby impairs the possible significance of an accentual structure. A further example is provided by shaped verse, which does not necessarily interfere with the stress patterning of a metrically irregular poem, so that such verse, in addition to its patent visual significance, may also be subjected to a rewarding analysis of its metrical structure. And, finally, the use of italics is another visual device that can be accommodated to the application of structural metrics. As a means of semantic emphasis, italicization is likely to affect the accentual patterns of a free verse poem. Thus, an italicized monosyllable tends to attract metrical stress without respect to the context of metre. Compare, for instance, line 9 of Katherine Mansfield's poem "Little Brother's Story":

> But though *I* liked this about the knot

Here, the italicization of the personal pronoun causes a complete change of metre. While the clause would normally be metricized without metrical stress on "I", the visual emphasis on this word entails not only its promotion, but also the consequent demotion of both adjacent syllables. The result is, then, a regular five-stress metrication: XxXxXxXxX. Yet, despite the above examples, we should note that all means of poetical vizualization which exceed the setting of linear boundaries and the grouping of lines must be regarded as more or less detrimental to the free development of a structural metre.

Apart from its limitation through linguistic disturbance, the application of our theory may be restricted by all sorts of metrical preconceptions. While the possible relevance of lineation to structural metrics accounts for any tendencies towards a regular linear stress pattern, and thus points to the metrical regularity of traditional verse, we are unable to reconcile our theory with a non-accentual concept of metre. However, if a metrical design is independent of stress patterns, it may well be complemented by structural metrics. The most obvious metrical organization to be

rhythmically probed by our theory is a pure syllabic metre, since the number of syllables represents a comparatively nugatory means of rhythmic grouping, which is easily superseded by the natural rhythms of syntax. The syllabic criterion of lineation remains, thus, neutral to the application of structural metrics. William Carlos Williams' concept of an isochronous *linear* metre, on the other hand, is incompatible with our concept of a structural metre, which exploits essentially the rhythmic significance of *accentual* isochrony. To apply our theory to any of Williams' poems that are supposed to conform with his metrical design, is to disregard the express intention of the author - which, however, does not inevitably predetermine the futility of a tentative analysis in terms of structural metrics. Our concept of a free verse metre has a wider range of applicability than is reasonably workable; and, therefore, we should take care not to overlook various other possibilities of poetic organization by assuming too confidently the general appropriateness of our own theory. Yet, in the end, it is the effectiveness of the resulting variational stress pattern which decides whether, in metrically dubious poetry, the application of structural metrics can be regarded as justified.

Since the limited validity of our theory is often in itself indicative of poetic metricality or non-metricality, we would not rate any of these applicatory restrictions among the disadvantages of structural metrics. Far more disadvantageous seems to be the factor of subjectivity when it comes to establishing a metrical structure in free verse. Although we have mentioned several criteria which help to determine the relative significance of each metrical component, there still remains plenty of room for intuitive assessments and an individual choice. Thus, a metrist who favours natural test readings will tend to underestimate the rhythmic power of regular stress patterns, whereas a metrist who inclines towards ideal test readings is more likely to neglect the importance of lexical stress. To find the right metrical balance is, to some extent, a matter of taste. The problem, here, lies not so much in the fact that intuition occurs at all in metrical theory, but that it occurs in our testing of the metrical stress patterns on level M.[192] As a consequence, structural metrics is often characterized by a certain degree of accentual vagueness and configurational indecisiveness, which reflects not only the influence of subjectivity, but also the changeable ground of interacting metrical elements.

Although interpretative uncertainty makes an unequivocal application of our theory more difficult, we should beware of considering this uncertainty to be, in general, metrically detrimental. Since structural metrics explores the rhythmic potential of free verse without shunning the difficulty of occasional analytical stumbling-blocks, it would be rather inadequate if a rhythmically ambiguous poem were described metrically by just one plain stress pattern. A rhythmical potential should be reflected by a metrical potential, though it is clear that the nuances of rhythm are never fully captured by metre.[193] But not only the various possibilities of metrical interpretation illustrate the idiosyncrasies of a free verse rhythm; an important indicator of rhythmicity will also be found in the mere *process* of metrical formation. In order to offset the unavoidable interpretational subjectivity of structural metrics and, thus, reach a certain level of objectivity, we must account for any

[192] Compare Ewald Standop's (1989) theory of conventional metres, where the abstract pattern on level M remains, in its structural rigidity, practically unaffected by intuitive judgements, while the preferential aspects of metre are largely confined to the performative level of realization.

[193] Cf. also Ramsey's (1968: 102) observation that "something is indescribable in any rhythm we hear. [....] The speaking reality of a rhythm remains a different thing from any analysis of it."

procedural difficulties and discuss the various analytical consequences of their metro-rhythmic effects. To this purpose, it is necessary that we observe the following basic principles of a structural metre:

- In English and German, linguistic rhythm is based on accentual undulations.
- Adjacent syllables in the same phrase tend to differ with regard to their accentual prominence (relative stress principle).
- The accentual undulations of linguistic rhythm are illuminated by their metrical reduction to a binary stress pattern.
- The mutual interaction of lexical stress, syntax, semantics, and the variational conditions of rhythmization and good gestalt creates the stress patterns of a structural metre.
- Variation informs all aspects of the metrical structure in free verse.
- The variational criteria are equal stress number and similar stress pattern in subsequent metrical units.
- Rhythmization exploits the linguistic tendency towards accentual isochrony.
- Good rhythmizability and good gestalt usually go hand in hand; yet, if they disagree, the former is metrically more important than the latter.
- Syntax is superseded by lineation as a grouping factor if the number of metrical stresses per line is apparently constant (this principle makes possible a transition between structural and conventional metrics).
- Lineation may occasionally replace syntax as a primary grouping factor, if the linear subdivision yields a decidedly better accentual variation of the previous metrical unit than would a syntactic subdivision.
- The establishment of a structural metre presupposes a desire for the experience of poetic rhythmicity.

With these elementary principles, it is possible to overcome the irregularity of the stress patterns in free verse by utilizing for their regularization both the rhythmical and variational features of accentual distribution. The resulting structural metre may serve as a useful tool for the analysis of rhythm in free verse.

5. English and German free verse - a metrical comparison

In the previous chapter, the metrical stress patterns of English and German free verse have been discussed randomly and without reference to their specific lingual environment. The development of a theory which claims to be applicable to the metrically irregular poetry of both languages presupposes that the accentual characteristics of English and German are largely compatible. Yet, where does this compatibility begin, and where does it end? A comparative examination will provide the answer. Even if we came to the conclusion that our perception of linguistic stress in English corresponds, on the whole, to our perception of linguistic stress in German, there might still remain plenty of room for disagreement between their respective sentence structures. As another major language feature relevant to the establishment of a structural metre, syntax furnishes the frame within which the metrical stress patterns unfold, so that any syntactic differences between English and German are likely to reflect differences between their metro-rhythmic potentials. A grammatical comparison of the two languages will, thus, pave the way for a metrical juxtaposition of English and German free verse poems.

If a comparative study of this kind is to yield significant insights, it requires the support of a solid methodological basis. Unfortunately, the most comprehensive approach - a corpus-based analysis - poses serious problems, since the highly flexible process of free verse metrication would have to be phonologically standardized to warrant the comparability of results. As the examples in Chapter 4 have shown, it is often quite impossible to make a clear decision in favour of one particular metrical stress pattern; and we must regard it as a genuine possibility, in the description of a structural metre, that sometimes two or three alternative interpretations are equally appropriate. Although a phonological standardization seems, therefore, undesirable in the context of free verse metrics, it will have to remain a practical option if one wishes to conduct statistical computations concerning the frequency of metrical gestalts. However, such an investigation is beyond the scope of this thesis. Rather than analysing a large corpus, we will draw upon translations in order to demonstrate how far the rhythmic characteristics of a free verse poem in German or English can be preserved when rendered into the other language. Apart from revealing the differences and similarities between the rhythmic potentials of metrically irregular poetry in English and German, this comparative approach will also tackle the question to what extent metro-rhythmic features are important in the translation of free verse.

This chapter, then, deals with the analytical possibilities in free verse of a discipline which, until now, has been widely neglected: comparative metrics. As M.L. Gasparov (1996: vi-vii) writes in his unparalleled work on European versification:

> There are books and articles on the history of the Russian, English, Spanish, Polish, and other systems of versification; quite frequently these publications are valuable and revealing. However, there is no scholarly literature on the history of European versification as a whole, on the complex network of interrelationships between the different European verse traditions. [....] The need for a generalizing overview is becoming more urgent every day; its absence is already beginning to hold up further work on the histories of individual verse traditions. This need has inspired my *History of European Versification*.

Yet, comparative metrics may be studied from a synchronic as well as diachronic perspective. Having adopted the latter point of view in Chapter 2, we will now focus on a metrical comparison between English and German free verse of the twentieth century. It will be demonstrated that, on the basis of our theory of structural metrics, the range of metro-rhythmic options within each of the two languages, and the ease with which these options can be employed by a free verse poet, become to a certain degree predictable.

5.1. Linguistic comparison

In his article, *German Phonetics between English and French*, Pierre Delattre (1964) argues that, contrary to usual assumptions, German has more phonetic characteristics in common with French than with English. Thus, "French and German have a majority of front vowels, English a majority of back vowels" (46); and also "the consonants of German are closer to those of French than to those of English" (48) as is demonstrated by the different articulations of /r/-sounds; diphthongization of vowels like /e/ and /o/ occurs only in English, not in French or German (see 49); and "loss of vowel color" (50) in unstressed syllables is an English, not a French or German, phenomenon; finally, whereas the phonetic characteristics of English indicate articulatory laxness, those of French and German tend towards tenseness (see 53). These are just a few examples selected from a far more comprehensive study. Its results are summarized as follows:

> Out of 20 phonetic features of German that were analyzed here, five and a half are shared with English: the place of stress, internal juncture, vowel duration, phoneme frequency, aspiration and the nature of stress; 14 are shared with French, and one is in between: the nature of stress with regard to loudness difference between stressed and unstressed syllables (54).

These findings may be surprising at first, given the general impression that the speech sounds of German seem to be more akin to those of English than to those of French. However, the apparent contradiction between the linguistic facts and our perception of them is easily resolved, if we consider that the features common to German and English include those which are perceived as most prominent, whereas the features common to German and French are perceptually less conspicuous. Interestingly, both the place of stress and its nature are counted among the former. This shows that the accentual qualities of a language play an important role in the way we conceive of it.

The close perceptual relationship between English and German is at least partly determined by the fact that "[t]he stressed syllable, in both languages, owes its prominence to a larger expense of articulatory energy, subjectively perceived as greater loudness in the stressed syllable than in the others" (Delattre 1964: 44). This impression is apparently conveyed by "an excess of consonant-closure duration and an excess of vowel intensity" (ibid.). Although more recent investigations into the nature of English stress suggest that pitch and duration rather than loudness are the major cues by which we recognize syllabic prominence (see Attridge 1982: 63), these findings do not detract from the basic assumption that the nature of stress in English is very similar to the nature of stress in German. Given such a basis of general

similarity between the accentual characteristics of the two languages in question, it becomes more interesting to point out the dissimilarities. Pierre Delattre notes, for example, that "the difference in loudness between stressed and unstressed syllables [....] is considerably less pronounced in German than in English: compare *Nationalität*, *etymologisch* to *nationality*, *etymology*" (1964: 44). We may consider this observation to be generally valid. Yet, how far the more marked contrast in English between stressed and unstressed syllables bears upon an interlingual comparison of accentual distribution and accentual flexibility must, on the whole, remain speculative because the aspect of relative stress intensity does certainly have a lesser impact on the parameters of an accentual system than do other linguistic factors such as word length or sentence structure.

In order to explain why the difference in loudness between stressed and unstressed syllables is more conspicuous in English than in German, we need to remember that in the first language the vowels of unstressed syllables are far more often reduced to schwa or its /◆/-sound equivalent than in the second language where vowel reduction is chiefly limited to the unstressed syllables of native words. German loanwords, however, are characterized by the occurrence of full vowels in non-final unstressed syllables.[194] Thus, while the word stress in "etymology" is preceded by a reduced /◆/-vowel and followed by schwa, the word stress in "etymologisch" does not cause its surrounding syllables to lose their vowel colour. Stress features such as pitch, duration, or loudness are, of course, more likely to be produced by full rather than reduced vowels: a syllable containing schwa as its vocalic nucleus is almost invariably perceived as low-pitched, short, and soft, whereas a full-vowel syllable will generally tend towards higher pitch, longer duration, and greater volume. As a consequence, the syllable which bears the main stress in the English example stands out more conspicuously from its immediate neighbours than the syllable bearing the main stress in the German example. It is probably no accident that Pierre Delattre, in his brief discussion of the relative contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables, gives only loanword examples; his findings seem to lose their significance in connection with words of Germanic origin, such as German "bitten" and its English cognate "bidden" (archaic past participle of "bid") or its English near-homophone "bitten" (past participle of "bite"), where the difference in loudness between stressed and unstressed syllables is based, both in English and German, on the same phonological relationship between a stressed syllable with full vowel and an unstressed syllable with schwa.

The phonological explanation outlined in the previous paragraph gives rise to further observations concerning the stress patterns of loanwords. Thus, there is no accentual distinction between unstressed syllables in German, because all the syllables of words like "exkommunizieren" or "anthropologisch" contain full vowels whether or not they meet end to end with the syllable bearing lexical stress. In English, by contrast, vowel reduction affects some unstressed syllables more than others, so that, in accordance with certain morphological restrictions,[195] many syllables attain secondary stress provided that they do not hinge on schwa as their vocalic centre. Compare, for instance, the accentual patterns of "anthropological" or "excommunication": while the first word has secondary stress on the first syllable, the second extends this feature also to the third syllable. Following William G. Moulton

[194] For a more detailed discussion, see Moulton (1963: 107).

[195] For example, stress shifts as in "philosophy" versus "philosophical" are morphologically conditioned. They comply with generative stress rules (see Halle and Keyser 1971).

(1963: 124), whose book has been the source for the above examples, we regard as particularly noteworthy "the long series of unstressed syllables which may occur in German as opposed to the up's and down's of stressed and unstressed syllables in English." The rhythmic effects of these different accentual tendencies in the two languages are, if anything, more favourable to English than to German verse when it comes to metricizing long polysyllables.

English, however, is more noticeable for its monosyllables rather than polysyllables: as an analytic language, it largely dispenses with inflectional endings, whereas German, being more synthetic in character, depends on a great variety of morphemes to express the number, gender, case, person, tense, and mode of its verbs, or nouns, or adjectives. Since many of these inflectional morphemes are either syllabic in themselves or produce an additional syllable when attached to the stem of a word, German tends to be more polysyllabic than English. This conclusion is supported by statistical research. Thus, A. Hood Roberts calculates that, on average, an English word consists of 1.31 syllables if frequency is taken into account; calculation by number of different word forms results in 2.19 syllables per word (see Roberts 1965: 44). The relative number of monosyllables amounts to 27.3% of different word forms; yet, their relative frequency is 76.9% of all words in total (see the table TOTAL ALL DECILES in Roberts 1965: 117). The German figures are as follows: word length by frequency: 1.66 syllables;[196] word length by number: 2.71 syllables; relative number of monosyllables: 9.0%; relative frequency of monosyllables: 54.6% (see Meier 1964: 242-44). Despite some differences in the word count procedures, the German and English results can be regarded as roughly comparable, since they are both based on a large and representative corpus.[197] Yet, even a less comprehensive study, such as Beth Bjorklund's (1978: 228) examination of the Shakespeare sonnets and a German translation, calculates 80% monosyllables of total words in the English original and 65% in the translated version.

The discrepancy between monosyllabicity in English and polysyllabicity in German has far-reaching consequences for the stress patterns in the two languages. If we accept that word stress is a feature relevant to all content words as opposed to function words,[198] then, English is more likely than German to produce accentual

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[196] The figures are based on a restricted count that excludes words which occur less than 51 times. Without this restriction , the average word length calculated by frequency is 1.83 syllables.

[197] Roberts' analyses are based on a study by Ernest Horn, *A Basic Writing Vocabulary* (Iowa City, Iowa: 1926):

> This study by Ernest Horn [....] gave the actual frequencies of occurrence of all words in the word count. These frequencies ranged from 715,130 (1) to 11 (12 words). The frequencies for all but 372 words are based on actual counts; the frequencies for the 372 words are estimates. The Horn list was based on a large number of running words (5,136,816). When the frequencies for the omitted words had been estimated and added to the lists, the total frequencies added up to more than 15,000,000. Therefore, the results of the Horn count approximates the results which would have been found had 15,000,000 running words actually been counted. Horn's count lists the most frequent 10,000 words.

Meier refers for his computations to Friedrich Wilhelm Kaeding, *Häufigkeitswörterbuch der deutschen Sprache* (1898-99). While the full corpus comprises 10,910,777 words, the 13,215 word forms actually counted make up a subtext ("Lückentext") of 9,909,542 words, which is 90.83% of the full corpus (see Meier 1964: 244).

[198] While content words comprise nouns, verbs, adjectives, and adverbs, function words are, for example, prepositions and conjunctions. Beth Bjorklund (1978: 285) lists a variety of distinctive appellatives: "lexical/ grammatical, content/ function, reference/ relational, full/ empty, major/ minor categories of words."

clashes. The polysyllabic quality of the second language, in which "no inflexional ending [....] ever bears stress" (Giegerich 1985: 25), favours the separation of stressed syllables by more than one unstressed syllable. Beth Bjorklund (1978: 257) comments:

> It is, of course, possible to get contiguously stressed syllables, but such strings are significantly less frequent in German than in English and apparently have not reached the point of becoming problematic. German thus retains stress rules which are, essentially, lexically based.

By contrast, the relatively high frequency of word-stress clashes in English necessitates some kind of rhythmic counterpoise. In what may be viewed as "a modification of the language to accommodate changes within itself" (Bjorklund 1978: 256), lexical stress becomes subordinate to phrasal stress. However, this is not to say that word accent ceases to be significant; rather, its function must always be considered relative to its linguistic environment. Thus, as Heinz Giegerich (1985: 206-222) demonstrates, both English and German are subject to *Iambic Reversal*, which increases the interval between two lexical stresses in a bipartite noun phrase by changing the position of stress in the weaker, left-hand constituent: just as the word-final stress of "thirteen" shifts to the first syllable in the phrase "thirteen men", the main stress on the second syllable of "unheilbar" moves to the beginning of the word in the phrasal combination of "unheilbare Krankheit". Although this linguistic device appears to be rhythmically motivated in the first place, one should not ignore its possible function of marking grammatical attribution.

In spite of a general tendency to avoid accentual contiguity, German verse of the iambic pentameter tradition seems to be less sensitive to adjacent stress than its English counterpart. "If back-to-back stress is largely avoided by German poets, the same holds true in English verse to an even greater extent, since in ordinary language English is even more resistant to contiguous stresses than German" (Bjorklund 1978: 380) - obviously, because of the above-mentioned subordination of lexical stress to phrasal stress. The ultimate reason for the wider acceptance of accentual juxtaposition in German compared to English may be found in the history of the two languages: while German preserves some affinity with the linguistic structures of its Germanic origins, English is too much affected by the influx of Romance words since the Norman conquest to retain the stress patterns of Anglo-Saxon (see Bjorklund 1978: 383). It appears, however, that the poetic practice of a language does not necessarily reflect its accentual properties. Consider, for example, the occurrence of a stress clash between two disyllables in a pentameter line such as

> And peace pro*claims ol*ives of endless age,

from Shakespeare's Sonnet 107 (quoted in Bjorklund 1978: 380). Beth Bjorklund remarks that this kind of metrical exception is extremely infrequent, and she continues:

> The number of exceptions is much lower in English verse than it is in German verse, although the English language provides more opportunities for juxtaposition of stress than does German. Whereas final stress in German is limited to foreign words and to forms with prefixes

> and without inflection, in the English language words of Romance origin with final stress are numerous. Since there is frequent occasion for this configuration to occur in English, all the more conspicuous is it when these strings are absent from the data (1978: 380).

The discrepancy between the linguistic potential of stress structures and their realization in metrically regular poetry leads to Marina Tarlinskaja's conclusion that "deviations from a meter are primarily the product of a poetic convention rather than of the 'pressure' of the language material" (1993: 10).

Unlike traditional poetry, free verse does not make use of a regular linear metre as part of its underlying rhythmic structure. Although free verse must, in some way or other, respond to the cognitive implications of accentual rhythmicity, its linguistic and metrical stress patterns rely to a much greater extent on the exigencies of their language material than do those of conventional verse. A comparative analysis of the metro-rhythmic structures in English and German free verse is, therefore, likely to reflect the accentual differences between the two languages. The fact that some kinds of free verse have little in common with the linguistic stress patterns of their lingual medium need not concern us here. For, in such cases, the irrelevance of typical German or English stress structures is paralleled by the relative inappropriateness of our metrical approach. For example, German polysyllabicity - whether in loanwords with long strings of lexically unstressed syllables, or in grammatical constructions that feature a conspicuous series of word-final morphemes - is likely to require more effort than English monosyllabicity in order to reconcile the accentual givens with the ideal of metro-rhythmic alternation. In other words, the metrication of a German free verse poem will, by comparison, incline more often towards trisyllabic or even longer intervals between metrical stresses than the metrication of an English free verse poem.[199]

Since a structural metre is also highly dependent on syntactic patterns, the extent to which English syntax is different from German syntax may affect the rhythmic potential of free verse in the two languages. It has been argued - for instance, by Fichtner (1979: 98-99) - that, in terms of transformational grammar, German is based on an underlying SOV pattern, whereas the infrastructure of English is best described as SVO. However, in the context of metro-rhythmic grouping, the infrastructural patterns are irrelevant; what determines rhythm and metre can be found only in the linguistic surface structure. Therefore, we need not be concerned with the question whether German be considered an SOV or SVO language (the latter deep-structure is preferred by Kunsmann 1973: 68-69), but we must take into account the syntactic rules according to which actual sentences are formed. Two of the most striking characteristics of German, as opposed to English, syntax are the final position of the finite verb in dependent clauses, and in main clauses the final positions of separable prefixes as well as of past participles or infinitives belonging to composite verb forms. These clausal structures have accentual consequences, as Emma Kafalenos (1974: 78) observes:

> In German both relative pronouns and words that elsewhere function as prepositions are often placed in a sentence in a position of stress - - the former when they introduce dependent clauses (and are stressed *because*

[199] Consider, by way of example, line 21 of Friederike Mayröcker's "Text mit Erdteilen" discussed in Chapter 4.

> they must be remembered until the finite verb of the clause, at the end of the clause, is reached); the latter when they function as separable prefixes and occur at the end of a sentence (always a position of stress).

While we would not agree with all the claims put forward in the above statement (for instance, the emphasis on relative pronouns is rather doubtful), the argument is valid inasmuch as the syntactic order of a clause acts on the semantic unfolding of that clause. Whether as separable-prefix or past-participle constructions, or whether as subordinate clause: any word order which, in German, stands out against the background of SVO main clauses entails a shift of attention towards those elements that are directly affected by the syntactic change. However, since the categories of syntax are not related to their lexical subcategories on a clearly defined basis, any predictions with regard to the metrical grouping structures of German or English free verse must remain tentative.

That the end of a sentence (or clause, or line of verse) should generally be a position of stress, cannot be maintained in either English or German. What one may claim is that the latter part of a sentence (or clause, or line of verse) plays an important role in the structuring of semantic information. This is particularly obvious in oral communication, because what is heard last will be remembered best.[200] A word or phrase which concludes a sentence (or clause, or line of verse) ought to carry more semantic weight than any of its predecessors. A syntactic (or clausal, or lineal) end-position is, therefore, most appropriately occupied by a content word rather than a function word, because the former is more highly charged with semantic information than the latter.[201] Reuven Tsur (1996: 75-77) demonstrates how, in Pope's couplets, the placement of semantically significant words - frequently effected by syntactic inversion - relates to points of closure. In free verse, this principle can be expected to operate at the level of the metrical unit, particularly, if the metrical unit coincides with a sentence or clause rather than with a syntactic phrase or line of verse. However, as an integral part of the syntactic structure in the two languages under scrutiny, the general disposition towards clause-final emphasis will probably not emerge as a decisive factor in the crystallization of metrical patterns in English and German free verse.

Whether the end of a sentence receives syntactic stress is, despite the plausibility of the above argumentation, still dependent on categorial aspects of syntax. In German, a main clause is different from a subclause in terms of word order and, therefore, in the manner through which a reader's or listener's attention is linearly guided towards the meaning of the clause; yet, the former is not different from the latter as regards the constituent which, normally, attracts syntactic stress. While the main clause is stressed in final position, the subclause moves its stress to the penultimate position. Compare, for example, "er spielt Klavier" and "wenn er Klavier spielt": in both cases, the grammatical object ("Klavier") receives syntactic stress. By contrast, the English equivalents - "he plays the piano" and "when he plays the piano" - are both stressed at the end of the clause. Further aspects of differentiation concern the habitual arrangement of modifiers. Since there is "place expression before time expression in English, but time expression before place expression in German"

[200] See Bjorklund (1978: 301, note 21), who quotes a passage from Otto Behagel, "Beziehungen zwischen Umfang und Reihenfolge von Satzgliedern", *Indogermanische Forschung*, 25 (1909), 138.
[201] For a clear argumentation in support of this statement, see Bjorklund (1978: 286).

(Moulton 1963: 117),[202] a clause-final syntactic stress will fall on different constituents within an English sentence compared to its German equivalent. Moulton (117) gives as examples, "[w]e're going to the movies at seven o'clock" and "[w]ir gehen um sieben Uhr ins Kino." In the first sentence, the expression of time bears syntactic emphasis; in the second, the expression of place is most prominent. When we try to assess the significance of these findings with regard to free verse metrics, we must keep in mind that syntactic stress constitutes the accentual pivot on which hinges the aptness or inaptness of all other syllables to be developed into a position of metrical stress.

If we turn from the syntactic norms of English and German to their syntactic potentials, we will see that the sentence structure of the second language is far more flexible than the sentence structure of the first. While English depends on word order to signify syntactic relationships, German determines these relationships to a great extent through inflectional endings. This is why German may topicalize almost any syntactic element as the theme of a sentence, whereas in English the theme is usually represented by the syntactic subject (see König 1971: 14, Fichtner 1979: 29, and Tarlinskaja 1993: 32). As Herbert L. Kufner (1963: 10) demonstrates, the flexibility of German syntax involves all the elements of a main clause except for the finite verb, which always retains its position immediately after the first element. However, the word order of subclauses allows only limited changes, if any. In general, we can say that a flexible syntax enhances the possibilities of metro-rhythmic patterning, because alternative sentence structures increase the number of linguistic stress patterns available to the poet for the establishment of a regular metre. While, in English, syntactic inversion must be considered a poetic licence whose acceptance depends on the historical period in which it is used, in German, a liberal handling of sentence structures is part and parcel of the linguistic system and can be freely employed to mould the stress features of words and phrases into metro-rhythmically advantageous patterns.

Apart from these general syntactic differences between the two languages, there also exist distinctive features which are not always present in the structure of a sentence but which represent nevertheless a source of considerable disagreement between English and German. For example, a participial clause is placed immediately after the referent noun in an English sentence such as "the gentleman reading the newspaper is the proprietor;" but it is placed before the reference noun in a German sentence such as "der die Zeitung lesende Herr ist der Inhaber" (Fichtner 1979: 373). While the sequential arrangement of the English version permits of a grouping boundary between the noun and its participial clause, these two syntactic components are inextricably conjoined in the German encapsulation. In English noun phrases, the position of a nominal modifier is determined by its complexity. This does not mean that a simple modifier - for instance, an adjective - may not sometimes occur in postnominal as well as prenominal position. However, if there are both possibilities of positioning a simple modifier, the choice of one of them involves semantic distinctions.[203] In German, such a dichotomy between premodification and

[202] This simplified version of a far more complex syntactic reality serves as an example of the potential differences between English and German sentence structures.

[203] Referring to D.L. Bolinger, "Adjectives in English: Attribution and Predication", *Lingua* 18 (1967), 7-34, König (1971: 27 and 50) gives the following example: (1) The only river navigable is to the north. (2) The only navigable river is to the north. While the sentence in (1) denotes occasion - that is, the only river navigable at that particular time; the sentence in (2) denotes characterization - that is, a river which is generally characterized as being navigable. It seems that, in the first sentence, the

postmodification does not exist. A further difference between the two languages arises, when we consider grammatical compounding in prenominal position. English allows for a practically unlimited variety of compounds, from "woman-hating" or "fast-running" to "good-looking" and "government-owned". It is assumed that "these formations are produced by a syntactic transformation" (König 1971: 34). Most compounds (e.g. "woman-hating") are confined to attributive use; only those that have become entrenched may also occur predicatively (e.g. "good-looking").[204] German, on the other hand, restricts compounding, as its formations "seem to be tied to certain lexical items" (1971: 34). Yet, all compounds in prenominal position - for example, "wirklichkeitsfremd" or "lärmempfindlich" - may also be used in predicative constructions. In view of the sporadic occurrence of compounds, this difference between English and German cannot be said to have any immediate impact on metrical grouping structures; for compounding constitutes only a minor feature within the large set of features by which the syntactic potential of a language is characterized.

Let us now try to assess the most important results of the linguistic comparison in this subchapter by measuring the metrical potentials of English and German against the ideal of accentual regularity at the level of metre. The question is, which of the two languages shapes up more easily into an alternating metrical stress pattern. English is clearly favoured with regard to linguistic stress structure, because its abundant monosyllables - governed as they are by a phrasal rather than lexical stress rule - can be fitted without much difficulty into the patterns of an ideal metre. By contrast, German tends to be accentually less flexible because of its prevalent polysyllabicity. The use of secondary stress in English words like "speculation" as opposed to unstressed syllables in the German equivalent, "Spekulation", hardly affects metrical suitability. While the English example can be metricized either XxXx or xxXx (depending on whether we promote or demote the secondary accent on the first syllable), the German word yields XxxX or xxxX as metrical stress patterns. Although the first three syllables of "Spekulation" are linguistically unstressed, it appears that only the initial syllable may, without wrenching, take metrical stress; the seemingly ideal metrication xXxX runs counter to linguistic expectation. The fact that, in German, lexical stress is less differentiated than in English does not enhance the metrical flexibility of the former language. Only its syntactic variability gives German a rhythmic advantage over English: for to allow free topicalization is to increase the possibilities of stress pattern combination. This advantage is, however, checked by the frequent occurrence in German of syntactic encapsulation, which reduces the number of grouping options, whereas the widespread concatenation of phrases in English permits of a more refined grouping structure. For these reasons, we may expect English free verse to be more easily metricized into regular stress patterns than German free verse.

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possibility of expanding a postmodifying adjective is implicitly exploited by the temporal specification inherent in the meaning of the postmodifier. In the second sentence, however, the implication of additional semantic features is impossible, because here the premodification cannot be augmented.

[204] See König (1971: 35). The examples of English and German compounds have been taken from this source.

5.2. Comparing the metrical patterns of English and German free verse

If translation is to form the basis of a comparison between the metrical patterns of English and German free verse, certain assumptions about this method must be critically treated in a preliminary discussion. To translate is to render a concept or idea expressed in one language into an equivalent concept or idea expressed in another language. However, equivalence of expression can be achieved in a variety of different ways ranging from total identity between the original word and its translation (for instance, in proper names) to a vague semantic relationship between the two. Translations of poetry are particularly demanding, because the meaning of a poem is so closely interwoven with its form that rhythmic patterns and sound structures cannot be detached from the semantic information they convey. Therefore, a poetic translation is likely to represent a compromise, and as such tends to be considered artistically inferior to the original work. The standards by which a poetic translation is being judged are, generally, different from those applying to the translated poem. Nevertheless, the translator must solve a twofold problem: on the one hand, he or she should remain faithful to the form and message of the primary text; but, on the other hand, he or she is also asked to produce the original's artistic equivalent. Since a satisfactory solution to this quandary seems to be, in many cases, impossible, some translators attempt to capture a poem's immaterial essence, its intrinsic voice. Burton Raffel (1988: 93), for example, translates Rilke's poem "Herbsttag" into his own poetic idiom, turning iambic pentameter into free verse; for "[i]ambic pentameter in German [...] is not the same thing, and does not have either the same effect or the same significance, as iambic pentameter in English" (91). Raffel's translation tries to be true to the original in that it is true to itself.

The irregular metrical form of a free verse poem is rhythmically less compelling than the alternating stress patterns of an iambic pentameter. Thus, in translating the rhythms of metrically irregular poetry, a translator will feel less urged to imitate the accentual structures of the original than in translating the rhythms of metrically regular poetry. At the same time, however, the rhythmic variability of free verse renders a translation of metrical patterns feasible, because there is generally no need - as there is in many translations of conventional poetry - to make an awkward choice between either preserving the metre and sacrificing the quality of linguistic expression, or preserving the quality of linguistic expression and sacrificing the metre. In free verse, then, rendering the metro-rhythmic characteristics of the original is less likely to prove detrimental to the artistic or semantic quality of the translation. Furthermore, a free verse translation that tries to account for poetic rhythm may still to a high degree correspond literally to the words of the primary text. This correspondence represents a major asset to our study, because it allows a direct comparison between metrical units that implicitly purport to express the same meaning. What we will obtain as the result of our comparative metrical analysis is a general idea of the extent to which the stress pattern gestalts of English and German are different if they relate to largely identical semantic concepts.

When we juxtapose a free verse poem and its translation, we must, of course, be aware of alternative renderings. It is often illuminating to compare several different translations of one and the same poem with regard to the aspects they emphasize. By way of example, let us examine how Christopher Middleton (in Tomlinson 1980: 557), Joachim Neugroschel (in Celan 1971: 29), John Felstiner (in Pinter et al. 1994:

31), and Michael Hamburger (in Celan 1988: 60) translate the opening paragraph (ll. 1-9) of Paul Celan's "Todesfuge". Here is the original:

> Schwarze Milch der Frühe wir trinken sie abends
> wir trinken sie mittags und morgens wir trinken sie nachts
> wir trinken und trinken
> wir schaufeln ein Grab in den Lüften da liegt man nicht eng
> Ein Mann wohnt im Haus der spielt mit den Schlangen der schreibt
> der schreibt wenn es dunkelt nach Deutschland dein goldenes Haar
> Margarete
> er schreibt es und tritt vor das Haus und es blitzen die Sterne er pfeift
> seine Rüden herbei
> er pfeift seine Juden hervor läßt schaufeln ein Grab in der Erde
> er befiehlt uns spielt auf nun zum Tanz.

Notable for its long lines, whose boundaries coincide with the boundaries of syntactic clauses and whose accentual patterns are mainly regular, this free verse poem is unequivocally classified as 24. The pervasiveness of its triple rhythm fails only occasionally after a syntactic boundary, which, therefore, stands out from the other syntactic boundaries. Duple rhythm is limited to the initial nuclear expression of the poem, "Schwarze Milch der Frühe", which recurs three times; it creates an articulate emphasis by slowing down the movement of the phrase in relation to all other phrases.[205] To employ this rhythmic contrast in an English translation seems virtually impossible, since the straightforward oxymoronic noun phrase "Schwarze Milch" must for semantic reasons be rendered "Black milk".[206] The resulting translation of the whole expression - whether as "Black milk of dawn" (Neugroschel) or "Black milk of daybreak" (Middleton, Felstiner, and Hamburger) - is metrically ambiguous: would a rhythmization of this phrase stress both the adjective ("Black") and the noun ("milk"), or would it demote one of them to avoid the intraphrasal contiguity of metrical stresses? One might argue that it is precisely this ambiguity which renders the phrase metro-rhythmically conspicuous in the English translation. Yet, how different is such a pattern, its effects how unlike those of the German original! And even if we could have produced an identical stress structure, its rhythmic prominence would still depend on our ability to contrast this metrical stress structure with all other metrical stress structures in the poem.

The importance of metre in Paul Celan's "Todesfuge" is evident. Its relentless progression in unstoppable triplets characterizes the work's rhythmic movement so thoroughly that any English translation is bound to pay tribute to the metrical stress patterns. However, a translator's commitment to a rhythmically equivalent rendering must not go beyond the limits of a semantically faithful rendering. A poem as densely constructed as Celan's "Todesfuge" would seem to permit of few translations that match equally well both rhythm and meaning of a line or phrase. Among these is the first half of line 2: all four English versions succeed in retaining the original metre,

[205] Duple rhythm is also, but not always, used to mark the onset of the imperative in direct speech, for example: "*Er ruft stecht tiefer* ins Erdreich ihr einen *ihr andern singet* und spielt" (l. 16, emphasis added). But, here, the sequence of regularly alternating stress and non-stress is disrupted by a syntactic boundary.

[206] Any translation of "Schwarze" as "coal-black" or "pitch-black" to approximate the accentual pattern of the original would be semantically unacceptable because of the direct contrast between the noun and its premodifier.

and the price paid for this rhythmic achievement is relatively small. Two of the translations are identical:

> we drink it at noon in the morning (Middleton, Hamburger),
> we drink it at noon and at daybreak (Neugroschel),
> we drink it at midday and morning (Felstiner).

The English version preferred by Christopher Middleton and Michael Hamburger substitutes an asyndetic construction for a syndetic one in the German original; Joachim Neugroschel's translation of "morgens" forgoes the opportunity to employ an etymologically related term; and John Felstiner accepts the use of one common preposition for two co-ordinated nouns which normally require different prepositions. None of these minor drawbacks would justify a rendering like "we drink it at noon and in the morning" or "we drink it at midday and in the morning"; for metre means too much in this context to be sacrificed to a pedantically literal translation.

Although it is comparatively insignificant whether a metrical stress pattern of the German original is copied in detail or just imitated in kind, the first option should be preferred to the second if, in all other respects, it can offer the same translational quality. Michael Hamburger's rendering of line 3 is the only one that retains the regular symmetrical hexasyllabic two-stress unit (xXxxXx) of Paul Celan's version: "we drink and we drink it." John Felstiner and Joachim Neugroschel write, "we drink and we drink," whereas Christopher Middleton translates, "drink it and drink it." They all capture the rhythmic spirit of the phrase by avoiding the most literal rendering, "we drink and drink;" but none of them opts for the rhythmically best version, "we drink it and drink it," which preserves not only the abstract metrical pattern but also the phrasal caesura of its realization. In order to offset the polysyllabicity of a German verb, an English translation may also occasionally resort to the progressive form and thereby maintain the original rhythm. In line 4, the German phrase, "wir schaufeln ein Grab," is most naturally rendered, "we dig a grave" (Hamburger); yet, for the sake of a triple rhythm, Middleton and Neugroschel choose, "we are digging a grave." A further possible way of translating this particular phrase is presented by Felstiner, whose version, "we shovel a grave," may, perhaps, be regarded as slightly less idiomatic than the other versions. It gains, however, in quality through an etymologically and metrically exact rendering.

How far one may go in trying to match the original metre is shown in the following two examples. The simple sentence in line 5, "Ein Mann wohnt im Haus," cannot be translated literally without altering its rhythmic character. Yet, while Hamburger, Felstiner, and Neugroschel yield to the inevitability of a lexical stress clash not easily overcome by an overriding phrasal stress when they write, "A man lives in the house," Middleton in his translation simply omits the verb and thus produces an appositional phrase which premodifies the following grammatical subject: "A man in the house he plays with the serpents he writes." The imitation of the metre is perfect. But whether this advantage is sufficient compensation for the semantic and syntactic changes remains doubtful. The next example concerns the translation of the proper name "Deutschland" in line 6. Of course, the English equivalent is "Germany", and all but one of the four translators consulted use this straightforward rendering. John Felstiner, however, leaves the original term unchanged, and thereby preserves the metrical transition of the German version between the temporal clause and the grammatical object of the line's main clause:

"when it grows dark to Deutschland your golden hair Marguerite."[207] If the proper name is translated into English, a sequence of three unstressed syllables becomes unavoidable.[208]

When a syntactic construction does not exist in the target language, a metrically identical rendering will often have to make slight changes to the information conveyed in the original. The clause in line 7, "und es blitzen die Sterne," is a case in point. There is no syntactic equivalent in English to the German possibility of postponing almost any grammatical subject (pronouns and personal names are usually excepted) by putting "es" in its place. Therefore, all translations correspond syntactically to the clause, "und die Sterne blitzen":

> and the stars are flashing (Hamburger),
> and the stars all aglisten (Neugroschel),
> and the stars are all sparkling (Felstiner),
> the stars glitter (Middleton).

Michael Hamburger keeps closest to the meaning of the original, accepting a slightly deviant stress pattern; whereas Joachim Neugroschel and John Felstiner add the word "all" in order to accommodate their metre to that of the German text. The translation by Christopher Middleton appears, at first, to be altogether out of step with the triple rhythms in Paul Celan's poem. Yet, if we consider the above clause in its linear context - "he writes it and walks from the house the stars glitter he whistles his dogs up" - we notice the possibility of demoting, in the wake of regular triplets, the linguistic stress on "stars" to a metrical non-stress. Nevertheless, it seems to us that, given the effortless rhythms of the original, Middleton's translation is, from a metrical point of view, not particularly successful.

In line 8, only Middleton and Felstiner observe the six stresses of the original. Yet, while the latter also succeeds in matching Paul Celan's syntactic boundary after the third stressed syllable,[209] the former subdivides the line into a two-stress unit followed by a four-stress unit:

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[207] The underlying metrical pattern, xxXxxXx|xXxXxxXx, would be better supported still, if we substituted Neugroschel's term "darkens" for "grows dark". It is, however, important to note that Felstiner himself gives a different, non-metrical reason for leaving "Deutschland" untranslated. In his article "Reconsideration: Paul Celan, The Biography of a Poem", the translator remarks:

> I have taken the chance a fugue offers to render this poem gradually back toward Celan's original German, toward the mother tongue that was all he had left. I've refrained completely from translating *Deutschland*, because it's familiar enough to us in song and story and occurs simply this once in all Celan's poetry. (1984: 31)

Thus, also the rendering, at this point in the poem, of "Margarete" as "Marguerite" is part of a deliberate translational design: the final section and closing couplet both preserve the German spelling.

[208] A metrication of "Germany your golden hair Margarete" as Xxx|XxxXxxXx, which demotes the lexical stress on "golden" in favour of the preceding possessive pronoun, is possible but not particularly convincing, because the syntactic boundary after "Germany" detaches the following grammatical object and thereby reduces the impact of the triple rhythm. Moreover, such metrical strain does not reflect the rhythmic quality of the original.

[209] Felstiner takes semantic liberties when he renders the verb "hervorpfeifen" as "whistle into rows". But this translation is not only justified by the metro-rhythmic result; it is also highly effective in another structural context: Paul Celan juxtaposes "pfeift [....] hervor" with "pfeift [....] herbei" in the previous line; John Felstiner echoes the similarity between the two adverbial particles by translating them as adverbial phrases endrhyming "close" with "rows".

he whistles his Jews out and orders a grave to be dug in the earth (Middleton),
he whistles his Jews into rows has them shovel a grave in the ground (Felstiner),
he whistles his Jews out in earth has them dig for a grave (Hamburger),
he whistles for his Jews he has them dig a grave in the earth (Neugroschel).

Like Middleton and Felstiner, Hamburger manages to imitate the metrical characteristics of the German version. His very concise five-stress rendering accepts, however, a syntactic inversion not warranted in the original. Neugroschel's translation is rhythmically rather ineffective: neither does he achieve accentual regularity, nor does he attain the balance of a caesural subdivision into two three-stress units. The last device could easily be brought about by omitting the repetition of the grammatical subject, "he": "he whistles for his Jews has them dig a grave in the earth" - xXxXxX|xxXxXxxX. In the final line, all translations but one correspond metrically to the original version:

he commands us strike up for the dance (Hamburger, Middleton),
he commands us to play for the dance (Neugroschel),
he orders us strike up and play for the dance (Felstiner).

What is at issue, here, is the semantic problem of translating the German verb "aufspielen", which denotes the act of playing a musical instrument for a particular occasion, but which implies, in its imperative form, also the commencement of that action. Whereas Hamburger and Middleton emphasize the second meaning, and Neugroschel points up the first (albeit with an infinitive construction rather than an imperative), Felstiner expresses both aspects, but he has to turn Celan's three-stress line into a four-stress line. In order to preserve at least the accentual characteristics of a triple rhythm, Felstiner translates the German verb "befiehlt" as "orders" rather than as "commands".

The above discussion has revealed a variety of lingual differences by which a translation of Paul Celan's "Todesfuge" is curbed in its attempt to capture the metro-rhythmic characteristics of the original. Thus, the German inflexional endings that produce a non-stress between the lexical stresses of two adjacent content words are absent in the English translation so that a stress clash becomes inevitable, as the rendering of "Schwarze Milch" as "Black milk" shows. Sometimes, though, it is possible to make up for the lack of an inflexional syllable in English, for example, by presenting an implied grammatical object explicitly ("trinken" vs. "drink it"), or by using the progressive form of a verb ("schaufeln" vs. "are digging"). As a rule, German requires more syllables than English to express a particular notion, but there are exceptions: the German contraction of a preposition and a definite article does not work in English ("im Haus" vs. "in the house"). There is also no English equivalent to the syntactic possibility of German "es" functioning as *Platzhalter* of a postponed grammatical subject ("es blitzen die Sterne" vs. "the stars are flashing"). Whether any such device can also be poetically defended, depends not only on the translator's handling of it, but also on the significance of rhythm in both the translated poem and the translating poem. The strong metrical impetus of Paul Celan's "Todesfuge" demands to be acknowledged in a translation. The possibility of successfully

rendering these poetic rhythms in English justifies, then, certain fudging techniques by which a particular sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables can be sustained.

We will now examine further instances of how the various structures of German grammar and syntax can be translated into English. What occurs as a grammatical feature in the first language may be absent in the second. Since there exists, for example, no English equivalent to the German prefix "ge-", which marks a past participle, the resulting lack of a syllable in the target language is likely to persist, whether the English version retains the participial form or uses some other grammatical construction. Thus, line 4 of Paul Celan's "Psalm" - "Gelobt seist du, Niemand" (xXxX|Xx) - has to be translated with an initial stress as in "Praised be your name, no one" (Hamburger in Celan 1988: 175), or "Blessed art thou, No-one" (Neugroschel in Celan 1971: 183). And lines 2 and 3 of Celan's poem "Eine Hand" - "Es wird/ geschwiegen, gegessen, getrunken" - are rendered "There is/ silence, eating, drinking" (Neugroschel in Celan 1971: 131). Yet, neither the accentual shift in the first example, nor the change from an amphibrachic to a trochaic lexical stress pattern in the second, produces a metrical result completely different from the original metre. Thus, the main rhythmic feature in line 3 of "Eine Hand", namely, the triple occurrence of a particular word-stress structure, is actually preserved in Neugroschel's translation. A metrical pattern will be more easily imitated if English grammar permits of a choice between two forms, as in the superlative formation of certain adjectives. Paul Celan's line, "Sie sind die gewaltigsten Zecher" ("Die Krüge", l. 6), can be rendered either, "They are the mightiest carousers" (XxxXxxXx, Neugroschel in Celan 1971: 43), or, "They are the most mighty carousers" (xXxxXxxXx, Middleton in Tomlinson 1980: 557). While the first translation retains the German form of a suffixal superlative and approximates the original metre, the second opts for a composite superlative to obtain an identical stress pattern.

It has already been pointed out that contractions of a preposition and a definite article, which are quite common in German, must be rendered into English by translating each component as a separate word. As we have seen in our discussion of Paul Celan's "Todesfuge", this may cause metrical problems. However, if the surplus of a syllable in the English translation is counterbalanced by a preceding monosyllabic verb whose German equivalent is disyllabic because of an inflexional ending, the stress pattern of the original may be perfectly retained:

> riechen im flachen novemberlicht
> scent in the shallow november light.

In this translation by Michael Hamburger of line 16 of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's "gedicht über die zukunft" (in Enzensberger 1968: 131), only the syntactic boundary between the finite verb and the postmodifying prepositional phrase deviates in its position from the rhythmic structure of the original. No such perfection is possible when a German contraction requires to be translated as three syllables:

> schwammen Fische ins Zimmer
> fishes swam into the room.

While, in the original version, the second line of Günter Eich's poem "Wo ich wohne" has three metrical stresses (XxXxxXx), Michael Hamburger's translation (in Eich 1991: 19) may well adopt four, XxXxXxX, although three-stress patterns such as

XxXxxxX or even XxxXxxX are also possible, notwithstanding the rhythmic weakness of either three non-stresses in a row or a demoted verb accent. A last example, line 16 of Paul Celan's poem "Es war Erde in ihnen", demonstrates the translational impossibility of keeping within the accentual limit set by the original:

Wohin gings, da's nirgendhin ging?

In its regular metrical context, as part of a rhyming 4-3-4-3 stanza, the line requires a three-stress pattern: xxX|xXxxX, or, perhaps, xXx|xXxxX. Joachim Neugroschel (in Celan 1971: 173) comes pretty close to a word-by-word translation, but his version - "Where did it go, if nowhere it went" - makes a clear four-stress line: XxxX|xXxxX. While the second contraction, "da's", is offset by a longer place adverb ("nirgendhin") so that the English rendering of the German subclause produces an identical stress pattern, the effect of the first contraction, "ging's", on a rhythmically sensitive translation is reinforced by the English requirement of an auxiliary verb in interrogative clauses, where German makes use of syntactic inversion. Whether one should, in this metrically regular stanza of a free verse poem, take semantic liberties and translate "Where go, if nowhere to go" remains a moot question; for the meaning conveyed by the metrical contrast between two free verse stanzas in the first half and two 4-3-4-3 stanzas in the second half of the poem is hardly less important than the meaning of individual words.

In a metrically less conspicuous environment, even minor adaptations of form to obtain an identical stress pattern may be out of place. Take, for example, lines 14 and 15 of Paul Celan's "Psalm":

Mit
dem Griffel seelenhell.

Both Michael Hamburger (in Celan 1988: 183) and Joachim Neugroschel (in Celan 1971: 175) translate the compound adjective as "soul-bright", thereby preserving the dense diction of the original, yet not its alternating stress pattern. It may seem quite straightforward to render line 15 metrically regular by means of a grammatical trick: "the style as bright as soul". However, the stylistic feature of the adjectival compound does not occur in isolation but is employed again in the following line, "dem Staubfaden himmelswüst", where a grammatical circumlocution in translation would be metrically disadvantageous. Both compounds, "seelenhell" as well as "himmelswüst", should therefore be translated as compounds. When Michael Hamburger remarks that German "lends itself to the formation of compound words in a way that English does not" (in Celan 1988: 24), he probably refers to nouns such as "Türspalt" or "Algenteilchen". These nominal compounds, quoted from "Zu spät für Bescheidenheit" and "Strandgut" by Günter Eich, are most naturally translated as noun phrases, for example, "chink in the door"[210] and "particles of seaweed" (Hamburger in Eich 1991: 151 and 15). The two renderings involve a complete change of accentual patterns.

Michael Hamburger (in Celan 1988: 24) points out that German verbs "can be given new directions, new functions, by combining them freely with prepositions like 'in', 'through', 'into', 'around', 'after'." This mode of prefixation, if used to create a

[210] "Türspalt" is commonly rendered as "crack of the door". But the context of Eich's poem suggests the meaning conveyed in Michael Hamburger's translation.

neologism, can cause severe semantic problems for a translator. In order to capture the meaning (or meanings) of the German original, he or she is likely to require an English multi-word expression. However, what appears to be a disadvantage from a semantic point of view may, metrically, turn into an advantage, if the English multi-word expression corresponds to a German polysyllable of similar length. In the following example from Paul Celan's poem "Weggebeizt" (ll. 3-4), the neologism of a prefixed verb occurs in its nominalized form:

> das bunte Gerede des An-
> erlebten - [....].

This noun phrase is metricized:

> xXxxXx|xX
> xXx.

Michael Hamburger's translation, "the garish talk of rubbed-/ off experience" (in Celan 1988: 231), preserves the metro-rhythmic character of the German text; for the number of metrical stresses is the same, and the balance between a triple rhythm in the first part of the original and a duple rhythm in the second is merely reversed in the English version.

The various ways in which grammatical differences between the two languages in question affect the translation of metro-rhythmic structures all come down to the basic distinction between the German tendency towards polysyllabic words and the English tendency towards monosyllabic words. A successful handling of stress patterns often requires that the translator forgo a semantically straightforward equivalent in favour of an accentually more suitable synonym. Here are two examples of such a technique:

> in ihrem dunkeln haus (Enzensberger, "das ende der eulen", l. 4),
> das Waten von Stiefeln (Huchel, "Ophelia", l. 3).

These lines have been very successfully translated by Jerome Rothenberg (in Enzensberger 1968: 17) and Michael Hamburger (in Huchel 1974: 27), respectively:

> in their unlighted house,
> the wading of gumboots.

In order to obtain an identical stress pattern, Rothenberg renders the German adjective as the negated past participle of an antonymous English verb rather than opting for the obvious translation, "in their dark house". When Hamburger translates "Stiefeln" as "gumboots" - not simply "boots" or, more elaborately, "rubber boots" - he, too, chooses to retain the original metre. Another accentually suitable term, "wellies", does not match the stylistic register of its German counterpart.

Polysyllabicity often demands a metrical decision between either promoting a weak syllable towards the end of a word, or accepting a sequence of more than two non-stresses in a metrical unit. A syntactic clause like the following from Eich's poem "Tauben" (l. 23) is ambiguous with regard to its metre:

> daß die Entscheidungen geschehen im Taubenflug.

Since the metre in the poem is generally not conspicuous for its stress pattern gestalts, the line is, perhaps, best metricized as:

XxxXxxxXxxXxx.

But this metrication constantly inclines towards promoting both the inflectional ending of the sixth syllable and the second part of the compound at the end of the line. Such a tendency does not show in Michael Hamburger's four-stress translation (in Eich 1991: 27):

that decisions are made by the pigeon's flight.

Here, the metrical pattern reveals a very effective two-stress variation between its phrasal constituents:

xxXxxX|xxXxX.

If this variational structure were applied to the German original, we would get:

xxxXxxxXx|xXxX.

Albeit possible, such a phrasal metrication is not particularly effective because of triple non-stresses as well as compound promotion in a strong-stress context. The first two lines of Günter Eich's poem "Reise" may serve as another example of the propensity in German for sequences of three unstressed syllables within the boundaries of a metrical unit:

Du kannst dich abwenden
vor der Klapper des Aussätzigen.

This can be metricized in two different ways:

(1) xXxXxx
(2) xxXxxXxxx, (A)
(1) xXxXxX
(2) xxXxxXxxX. (B)

The urge towards a perfectly regular metrical stress pattern (B) is somewhat checked by the inflexional weakness of the final syllables in units (1) and (2). In the English translation by Michael Hamburger (in Eich 1991: 21), two- and three-stress metrications are equally acceptable:

You can turn away
from the leper's rattle.
(1) xxXxX
(2) xxXxXx, (A)
(1) XxXxX
(2) XxXxXx. (B)

These examples demonstrate that, owing to the grammatical disposition in the German language towards long series of unstressed syllables, the metrical analysis of a German free verse poem is more likely to produce a relatively unstable stress structure than the metrical analysis of an English free verse poem.

It is often possible for a translator to make minor grammatical adjustments so as to approximate or preserve the metrical stress structure of the original. Thus, a mere change of number may already produce the desired effect:

> und das Erkennen des Habichts (Eich, "Tauben", l. 11),
> how the recognition of hawks.

The translation by Michael Hamburger (in Eich 1991: 27) closely imitates the rhythmic characteristics of Günter Eich's line. Compare:

> XxxXxxXx (Eich),
> XxxxXxxX (Hamburger).

A more literal rendering that observed the singular of the genitive postmodifier - "how the recognition of the hawk" - would tend to be metricized XxXxXxXxX, a metrication not particularly favourable in an accentual environment dominated by frequent disyllabic intervals between metrical stresses. Sometimes, however, the characteristics of a triple rhythm cannot be retained in translation. Take, for instance, lines 3 and 4 of Eich's poem "Timetable":

> Entscheidungen aussprechen
> ist Sache der Nilpferde.
> (1) xXxxXxx
> (2) xXxxXxx.

Since an English rendering will hardly be able to avoid the polysyllable "hippopotamuses", the duple rhythm of that word (XxXxXx) becomes a metre-fixing element within the sentence as a whole. The translator may preserve the regularity of the original stress pattern; but its triple rhythm and stress number will have to remain without a corresponding English equivalent. Here is Michael Hamburger's translation (in Eich 1991: 161):

> It's up to hippopotamuses
> to pronounce decisions.
> (1) xXxXxXxXx
> (2) XxXxXx.

In another example, Hamburger (in Huchel 1974: 33) only retains the number of stresses:

> die Schatten der Hügel (Huchel, "Exil", l. 2),
> the hill's shadows.

There are two translational alternatives: the first, “the shadows of the hills”, would tend to attract three metrical stresses (xXxXxX); and the second, “the shadows of hills”, is not appropriate in its semantic context, besides being slightly incongruous with the meaning of the original.

Though sometimes inevitable, accentual contiguity should generally be avoided in translation unless the primary text, too, contains this rhythmic feature. Much depends, however, on the position of a stress clash: while a strong syntactic or linear boundary between two adjacent stresses diminishes the rhythmic effect of the device, its full disruptive force becomes evident if the accents are juxtaposed in the middle of a syntactic phrase. In the following example, lines 5 and 6 of Werner Dürrson’s poem “Feierabend”, the contiguous stresses are separated by a lineo-phrasal boundary:

> steht der Bauer als Baum verkrümmt
> zwischen den Bäumen.

The metrication of these lines is quite straightforward:

> (1) XxXx (2) xXxX
> (3) XxxXx.

Michael Hamburger (in Dürrson 1995: 27) observes in his translation the linear split between the clashing stresses, but not the variational two-stress structure of the original:

> the smallholder gnarled as a tree
> stands among trees.
> (1) xXxxXxxX
> (2) XxxX.

While, here, the appositional phrase (“gnarled as a tree”) clearly modifies the preceding noun (“smallholder”), the equivalent German phrase (“als Baum verkrümmt”) may refer back to either the noun (“Bauer”) or the finite verb (“steht”). The last possibility suggests a syntactically different translation:

> the smallholder stands gnarled as a tree
> among the trees.
> (1) xXxxX (2) XxxX
> (3) xXxX.

If we retain the linear arrangement of the original, an intralinear stress clash must be accepted in order to emulate the two-stress variation of the German version. Note also the more literal rendering of “zwischen den Bäumen” as “among the trees”; Hamburger’s translation without the definite article (“among trees”) seems to pay tribute to the rhythmic implications of its syntactic pattern.

The question whether the sentence structure of the original or its stress structure should be preferred in translation cannot be decided in general, but depends on the contextual significance of metre. Michael Hamburger (in Trakl 1968: 37) gives priority to syntax when rendering line 7 of Trakl’s poem “Elis I”:

Am Abend zog der Fischer die schweren Netze ein.
At nightfall the fisherman hauled in his heavy nets.

In the English version, this order of the syntactic elements represents the most idiomatic variant; but it fails to achieve the rhythmic force of the German line, as the following metrication shows:

xXxXxXx|xXxXxX (Trakl),
xXx|xXxXxXxXxX (Hamburger).

However, if we invert the positions of adverbial phrase ("At nightfall") and subject ("the fisherman"), we obtain a translation which, it is true, must be regarded as syntactically less idiomatic, but which reproduces the exact metrical structure of the original:

The fisherman at nightfall hauled in his heavy nets.
xXxXxXx|xXxXxX.

This rendering would do justice to the metrical impetus of a four-beat rhythm in the German version. Yet, even without such a strong rhythmic stimulus, a syntactic reversal in the English translation may be acceptable in order to capture the stylistic characteristics of the original. Compare, for instance, the following renderings by Neugroschel (in Celan 1971: 41) and Hamburger (in Celan 1972: 26 and 1988: 67) of the final line of Celan's poem "Kristall":

sieben Rosen später rauscht der Brunnen.
XxXxXxXxXx.
seven roses later, the well moans (Neugroschel),
XxXxXx|xXX.
seven roses later, the fountain begins to plash (Hamburger 1972),
XxXxXx|xXxxXxX.
seven roses later plashes the fountain (Hamburger 1988),
XxXxXxXxxXx.

Celan's regular trochaic pentameter is difficult to imitate, since the inversion of subject and verb, which is caused by the German topicalization of an adverbial phrase, is not permitted in standard English. Thus, the necessity of a definite article before the noun ("well" or "fountain") invariably produces a sequence of two metrical non-stresses and thereby disturbs the trochaic stress pattern. Even more important is, however, the rhythmic effect produced by shifting an adverbial to the beginning of the sentence: if the English version retains in the main clause its syntactic order of subject plus verb (as in the first two renderings), a strong caesura disrupts the rhythmic flow immediately after the initial phrase ("seven roses later"). Ignoring the normal sentence structure of English, Michael Hamburger emulates in his more recent translation the syntax of the German original. His metrical patterns come very close to the trochaic regularity of Celan's poem, and the syntactic inversion avoids a gratuitous caesural break.

While in some cases the imitation of an inverted German syntax is still acceptable from a stylistic point of view, in others, such translational freedom appears to be

rather idiosyncratic and, therefore, inappropriate. Take, for instance, the first sentence in lines 1 and 2 of Georg Trakl's poem "Trompeten":[211]

> Unter verschnittenen Weiden, wo braune Kinder spielen
> Und Blätter treiben, tönen Trompeten. [....].
>
> Under trimmed willows, where tanned children play
> And leaves blow, tone trumpets. [....].

The inversion of subject ("trumpets") and verb ("tone") in the main clause of Robert Grenier's word-by-word translation (in Trakl 1968: 21) sounds awkward, not least because the normal syntactic order ("trumpets tone") would yield a metro-rhythmically smoother stress pattern. What in the German original is syntactically idiomatic should not, as a rule, be imitated but translated into an equally idiomatic English sentence structure. Especially, the encapsulation of German dependent clauses cannot be retained in the target language, as the following example demonstrates:

> *da es alle springfedern* (wieland
> *der einbildungskraft und des herzens*
> *zugleich*
> in einer alten Gasse
> *spielen macht*,
>
> *since it brings into play* (wieland
> *all springs of imagination*
> *and of the heart*
> in an old street
> *simultaneously*.

In this rendering of Hans Magnus Enzensberger's "sommergedicht ii", lines 4 to 8, Michael Hamburger (in Enzensberger 1968: 135 and 137) has no choice but to rearrange the elements of syntax. Eventually, two linear groupings of the English and the German version ("*zugleich*", "in einer alten Gasse" vs. "*simultaneously*", "in an old street") contain corresponding syntactic material. That, metrically, the translation departs at random from the original is not particularly disturbing as metre seems to be somewhat submerged in a comparatively unspectacular language. In "sommergedicht", the linear patterns of phrases on the page are more conspicuous than the rhythms of accentual structures.

The linguistic differences between English and German affect the translation of their poetry in either direction. One might, perhaps, assume that to render English free verse into German poses more difficulties than to render German free verse into English - if due attention is being paid to the rhythmic characteristics of the original - because German, on the whole, needs more syllables than English to express the same semantic concept. While the original poet forms out of language an expression which is conceived in that language, the translator renders a given concept into another

[211] Note that this rhyming poem does not count as free verse, since Trakl obviously composed it with the pattern of a hexameter in the back of his mind. Robert Grenier's rhymeless translation (in Trakl 1968: 21), however, is metrically too irregular to pass as conventional verse, and therefore must be considered free verse.

language. Ideally, this process consists in a complete linguistic appropriation of the expression to be translated, but there is often no possibility of attaining the stylistic concision of the original. Thus, owing to the relative linguistic density of English compared to German, and because diluting language is easier than condensing it, English may with less difficulty imitate the metrical patterns of German than vice versa. In order to approximate the original rhythms in a German translation of English verse, the translator is frequently forced to dispense with the advantages of a literal rendering and to resort to conceptual modes of translating. Here is an example:

> Who wanted the soul to ring true
> And plain as a galvanized bucket
> And would kick it to test it?
>
> Der du wolltest, die Seele sei lauter
> Und echt wie ein rostfreier Eimer,
> Und den Abkratz-Test machtest?

Seamus Heaney's poem "Two Quick Notes I", lines 4 to 6, has been translated by Giovanni Bandini and Ditte König (in Heaney 1995: 39). Most of his verse in *The Haw Lantern* explores the metro-rhythmic ground between regular and irregular linear stress patterns - a fact which, in itself, suffices to indicate the relative significance of metrical structures. Bandini and König, then, do their best to preserve Heaney's rhythms: in line 6, for instance, they focus on the presentation of the purpose ("to test it") of a particular action ("would kick it") rather than on the action itself, and thereby succeed in producing, quite idiomatically, a German translation which is metrically identical with the English version.

Similarly successful are the renderings of "Two Quick Notes I", line 7, and "Two Quick Notes II", line 8, respectively:

> Or whack it clean like a carpet.
> Oder den Staub aus ihr prügeltest.
>
> In shattered free fall.
> In freiem Zerfall.

Compare the more literal alternative translations: "Oder sie sauber klopftest wie einen Teppich," and "In zerschlagenem freien Fall". In both cases, the German version features an additional metrical stress (XxxXxXxXxxXx and xxXxxXxX), whereas Bandini's and König's solutions are, in terms of stress number, altogether congruent with the English original. Another example, lines 11 and 12 of Heaney's poem "The Stone Verdict", demonstrates how the peculiarities of German grammar can be employed in order to obtain a metrically effective translation:

> Until he stood waist deep in the cairn
> Of his apotheosis: [....].
>
> Bis er hüfttief im Steinhügel stand
> Seiner Apotheose: [....].

If translated literally, the German lines would run thus:

Bis er hüfttief im Steinhügel seiner
Apotheose stand: [....].

Here, the encapsulating sentence structure contrasts with the English version, in which the phrasal boundary at the end of the line suggests also the possibility of a metrical boundary. The translation by Giovanni Bandini and Ditte König (in Heaney 1995: 41) reduces the impact of encapsulation, and thus comes close to the metro-rhythmic style of Heaney's lines. The resulting syntax is, however, ambiguous: for the German version can be regarded either as syntactically defective but semantically true to the original, or as syntactically flawless but incongruous with the English sentence pattern and meaning. All depends on the syntactic function of the phrase "Seiner Apotheose": if it represents, like its English equivalent, a genitive modification of the noun ("Steinhügel") in the previous line, the German syntax is highly strained in its structural possibilities; yet, if it is considered an appositional phrase in the dative case, paralleling rather than modifying the previous noun, the sentence pattern of the German text is acceptable but produces a meaning slightly different from that of the original. If the translators had clearly intended the latter interpretative variant, they could have punctuated the end of line 11 with a comma, thereby marking off a temporal clause followed by an apposition. As it stands, the German rendering remains syntactically equivocal.

To conclude the metrical comparison between English free verse and its German translation, let us, finally, analyse the first ten lines of the second part of T.S. Eliot's poem "The Hollow Men" and their rendering by Hans Magnus Enzensberger (in Eliot 1972: 131 and 133):

Eyes I dare not meet in dreams
In death's dream kingdom
These do not appear:
There, the eyes are
Sunlight on a broken column
There, is a tree swinging
And voices are
In the wind's singing
More distant and more solemn
Than a fading star.

Augen, deren Blick ich fürchte,
Die nicht erscheinen
Im Traumreich des Todes:
Dort sind die Augen
Sonnenlicht auf Säulentrümmern
Dort, ein Baum der sich wiegt
Und Stimmen sind
Im Gesang des Winds
Ferner und feierlicher
Als ein verblassender Stern.

In the first line, the dense sequence of Eliot's monosyllables cannot be reproduced in the German language: all English content words, if translated literally, would correspond to German polysyllables, and the elliptical relative clause of the original

requires a relative pronoun in the target language. Enzensberger, then, opts for a semantically free rendering whose metrical patterns are very similar to those in Eliot's version. It is impossible to maintain this similarity in the translation of line 2, where the genitive premodification of a compound noun whose second component is disyllabic produces a triple stress clash. The German version, "Im Traumreich des Todes", is metricized regularly symmetrical as xXxxXx. In line 3, Eliot's three-stress pattern, XxXxX, could be preserved, if we translated "Die erscheinen nicht". Compared with Enzensberger's version, this rendering would more closely correspond to the sentence structure of the English original - where the subject's anticipated identification (line 1) is followed by a prepositional phrase (line 2), which then is adverbially related to the final main clause (line 3) - by similarly disrupting the syntactic flow through left dislocation of the subject:

> Augen, deren Blick ich fürchte,
> Die erscheinen nicht
> Im Traumreich des Todes.

What these lines still fail to convey is the syntactically ambivalent character of the prepositional phrase ("In death's dream kingdom") in Eliot's version. Although that phrase functions primarily as an adverbial premodifying the following main clause, it may - especially in the linear process of reading - also be considered a prepositional postmodification of the infinitive ("meet") in line 1, and thus become part of the relative clause. The following translation captures this ambivalence:

> Augen, deren Blick ich fürchte
> Im Traumreich des Todes
> Erscheinen die nicht.

While Enzensberger chooses a syntactically smooth rendering which transforms the English main clause into an additional relative clause and metrically substitutes a two-stress variation for a three-stress variation in lines 2 and 3 (xXxXx/ xXxxXx for xXXXx/ XxXxX), the above translation remains true to the syntax of the original without being deprived of an effective variational metre.

Of the remaining lines in the above-quoted passage by Eliot, the fourth, seventh, and tenth are so straightforward in their translations that no further comment is necessary. Yet, the imagistic phrase in line 5, "Sunlight on a broken column", challenges the translator's ingenuity since its metrical regularity, XxXxXxXx, ought to be somehow reflected in the German version. Enzensberger uses a nominal compound ("Säulentrümmern") to translate the English combination of adjective plus noun ("broken column"), and by that device retains the metrical stress pattern. These accentual structures of the translation are, in addition, morphologically reinforced as the distribution of the first and second elements of either compound noun produces a dipodic rhythm. Though not warranted by the original, such extra emphasis - still augmented by the alliteration between "Sonnenlicht" and "Säulentrümmern" - offsets, to some extent, the impossibility of emulating in lines 6 and 8 the structural features of stress clash and rhyme ("tree swinging"/ "wind's singing"). The German translation, here, merely succeeds in producing a metrical pattern of good variational gestalt:

Dort, ein Baum der sich wiegt
Und Stimmen sind
Im Gesang des Winds.
(1) [a] X|[b] xXxxX
(2) xXxX
(3) xxXxX.

Apart from the two-stress variation in units (1b), (2), and (3), we may acknowledge the close sonic correspondence between "sind" and "Winds" as a means of paralleling the rhyme employed by Eliot.

The translation of a grammatical comparative often involves changes in metro-rhythmic quality, as line 9 demonstrates:

More distant and more solemn,
xXxXxXx.
Ferner und feierlicher,
XxxXxxx.

In either case, the stress patterns do not represent the only metrication possible. Thus, comparison with periphrasis in the English example permits of further emphasis on the periphrastic element ("more"), which suggests a variational structure with two accentual stresses: XXx|xXXx. And the inflectional forms of the German version produce additional weak syllables so that, to make the resulting triple non-stress rhythmically regular, an alternative metrication, XxxXxXx, becomes equally acceptable. Thus, both Eliot's original and Enzensberger's translation show a potential for metrical alternatives, but the accentual variants in the two examples betray considerable differences as to their metro-rhythmic quality. While the English metrications are supported either by regular alternation of stress and non-stress or by an intralinear two-stress variation which reflects the underlying grammatical parallelism, the metrical patterns of the German translation are characterized by their lack of linguistic support for a rhythmically compelling distribution of beats. But although there seems to be little semantic scope for metrically more effective renderings, here are two possible alternatives:

Ferner noch und feierlicher,
XxXxXxXx.
Feierlicher und entfernter,
XxXxXxXx.

In both translations, the regularity of the underlying metre justifies the promotion of the third syllable in "feierlicher". Neither the lexical addition in the first alternative, nor the inversion in the second has a palpable impact on the meaning of the original.

The results of the above investigation into the metrical structure of English and German free verse can be summarized by juxtaposing the various linguistic qualities of the two languages and their influence on the rhythmic potential of metrical stress patterns. Most important from a metrical point of view is the contrast between English monosyllabicity and German polysyllabicity, because word length strongly affects the possibilities of regularizing the alternation between stress and non-stress: in English, where the dominance of phrasal stress diminishes the significance of word stress,

syllables are more easily promoted or demoted than in German, where lexical stress retains its full force. While demotion is relatively common in the metrication of an English poem, owing to the not infrequent occurrence of accentual clashes, the strings of three or more unstressed syllables in German - caused by polysyllabicity and a comparatively less pronounced difference in loudness between stressed and unstressed syllables - call for metrical promotion. Adjacent stresses, it is true, are not as frequent in German as in English; but when they occur in the former language, their rhythmic impact is not so easily smoothed away by demoting one of the stressed syllables. In general, then, the metrication of an English free verse poem tends to be more straightforward than the metrication of a German free verse poem.

Although it may be assumed that the accentual patterns of English free verse make for greater metro-rhythmic effectiveness than those of German free verse, at least where the linguistic rhythms appear to have been neglected, there is no doubt that, in either language, the rhythmic quality of a poem depends ultimately on the ingenuity of the poet. The extent to which a translator of free verse should pay attention to metrical structures is determined by the accentual regularity of the original: the more regular the stress patterns and stress pattern variations, the more conspicuous they are, and the more they impinge on the poem's overall meaning. In translating the rhythms of a free verse poem, the *relation* between contiguous stress patterns is often more important than the pattern itself. Thus, a three-stress variation is better rendered into a two-stress variation rather than into a three-stress pattern followed by a two-stress pattern. It goes without saying that the syntactic boundaries of metrical units should equally be preserved in translation. Despite these great demands on the translator's verbal skill, his or her faithfulness to the meaning of the original is not only put to the test by aspects of rhythm and metre, but also by questions of artistic quality. For a poetic rendering ought to satisfy both a desire to understand the poem of a foreign language, and a desire to enjoy the translating poem as a work of art. The validity of the comparative approach in this chapter relies to a great degree on the importance of poetic values, because it is they that justify the independent existence of a translation as a poem in its own right. Albeit restricted by the interlingual relationship to another poem, the translation deserves, then, to be examined on its own terms. Its semantic link with the original mainly serves to establish the common stylistic basis on which two free verse poems written in different languages can be metrically compared. The outcome of this comparison between English and German free verse has shown how far, and in what manner, the stress patterns of metrically irregular poems are affected by the morpho-syntactic characteristics of their specific language.

What is the significance of these findings for comparative metrics? The cognitive approach adopted here would seem to be at the same time both advantageous and disadvantageous to a metrical comparison: on the one hand, its controlled flexibility prevents it from oversimplifying the rhythmic potential of free verse; on the other hand, the possibility of alternative metres in a particular line or phrase often disallows an unequivocal metrical juxtaposition of English and German free verse. Because of this interpretative variability, the results of a metrical analysis are not generally compatible, but may be set side by side only on the condition that the mode of their manifestation is closely inspected and, if necessary, discussed at large. Therefore, an extensive statistical examination of the relative frequency of metrical stress patterns in free verse appears to be impracticable, unless we find a means of standardizing the

process of metrication. The problems faced by such a standardization will be briefly sketched below. Although a metrical comparison based on translation does not yield the same comprehensive insight into the lingual suitability of certain accentual gestalts as would a comparison based on statistics, the results of our translational approach are sufficiently reassuring to be considered a valuable contribution to comparative metrics: on the whole, they confirm the metro-rhythmic quality and potential predicted for each of the two languages under investigation.

One may, however, ask the question whether English and German free verse can be compared at all with regard to their metrical patterns, or whether the rhythmic perception of these languages is so dissimilar that it renders a comparison useless if not impossible. In other words, does an English reader of a free verse poem in English experience the linguistic rhythms of that poem in a way fundamentally different from, or exactly the same as, that of a German reading a free verse poem in German? Let us recall Burton Raffel's (1988: 91) contention that "[i]ambic pentameter in German [...] is not the same thing, and does certainly not have either the same effect or the same significance, as iambic pentameter in English." This statement most appropriately points up the different roles played by the iambic pentameter in the historical developments of English and German verse tradition; and to some extent the conclusion is equally permissible that the perceptual effect of a pentameter poem is influenced by the poem's general association with all other poems composed in the same metre. Yet, although the German iambic pentameter does not represent the predominant verse form epitomized by its English counterpart, the two lingually distinct but structurally identical metres have rhythmically more in common than any other English and German metres of a different structure. To put it bluntly: the rhythmic effect of an English pentameter is best imitated by a German pentameter rather than by, say, a German tetrameter or free verse pattern. For the organizing force of an underlying metrical template has a greater impact on our perception of poetic rhythm than the variable realization of that template in different languages.

In free verse, then, a German poem will most likely be regarded as rhythmically correspondent to an English poem, if their metrical structures are identical, although such an identity does not account for the fact that two metrically equivalent stress patterns relate in different ways to the accentual norms of their respective languages. Thus, a free verse metre with predominantly monosyllabic intervals between stresses will appear more natural in English, whereas German favours intervals of two or even three non-stresses. The dactylic rhythms in Paul Celan's "Todesfuge", for example, are less conspicuous than would be those of a metrically identical translation: although the German and English stress patterns of the type Xxx feel rhythmically similar, they make a different impression from a poetic (or linguistic) point of view. Comparative metrics - as presented in this chapter - deals primarily with the first issue in that it juxtaposes two metrical gestalts and examines them in terms of their inherent rhythmic quality. It does not take into account the relative significance of a particular rhythm within a given language. Such an investigation - if it is at all possible - would involve a large amount of statistical data gathered on the basis of invariable procedural rules.

Unlike traditional syllabo-tonic metres, the metrical gestalts of free verse are variable. This variability affects the way in which comparative metrics works: while a comparison of two poems in iambic pentameter must focus on the linguistic realization of the given metrical template (for it is no use comparing identical patterns), the metrical structures of free verse can be compared directly on level M

because they closely reflect in their changing patterns the actual rhythms of each individual poem. Not that two identical gestalts evoke exactly the same rhythmic response, but the relationship in free verse between a linguistic rhythm and its underlying metre is close enough to permit of an immediate comparison between metrical patterns. Our theoretical concept of a structural metre prepares the way for such a comparison. Its applicability to English and German free verse opens up new perspectives for comparative metrics, because any linguistic differences between the two languages which become rhythmically effective are at least partly integrated into the metrical stress pattern. The comparison of metre in English and German free verse juxtaposes, then, not just two abstract sequences of undulating syllabic prominence but indirectly accounts for the linguistic qualities behind these metrical structures.

From a historical point of view, the close metrical analysis of irregular accentual patterns enhances the possibility of distinguishing between different free verse forms. This distinction is particularly useful in comparative metrics: it enables us to follow up and compare, in various languages, the disintegration of traditional metres, even beyond the point where they become unpredictable, right to the total obliteration of linguistic sound and rhythm in some concrete poetry. The metro-rhythmic structure of any poem in English or German can, thus, be minutely described and historically assessed. In principle, it should be possible to establish, for any period in the development of free verse, a metrical norm, against which can be measured the historical significance of each particular free verse metre. Unlike conventional metres, the stress patterns of free verse are not lineally organized, so that a clear distinction between poetic forms - such as between a pentameter and a hexameter - does not exist. This is, of course, an essential presupposition for further investigations into the normative metrical structure of a free verse prototype, because only the mixture of different stress patterns within a verse line or poem justifies an attempt to figure out the average metre of free verse at a particular point in the history of metrically irregular poetry. Thus, one might calculate, for example, the ratio of lines per poem; of syllables and stresses and metrical units per line; of syllables and stresses per metrical unit; and of intraphrasal, interphrasal, and interlinear stress clashes per line. Applied to a historically defined free verse corpus - say, the free verse of Imagism in England, and the free verse of Expressionism in Germany, both of which cover approximately the years from 1910 to 1925 - these calculations would give a rough idea of the metrical differences between English and German free verse during that period.

A comparative metrics based on statistical computation is, however, practically inconceivable unless we find a means of standardizing the process of metrication. The problems posed by such methodological demands are not easily overcome, since a metro-rhythmic interpretation does not always result in just one metrical stress pattern for a particular sequence of words. Here is a brief account of the issues that need to be clarified:

(1) assessing the rhythmic force of a metre
- in relation to a particular stress pattern gestalt
  - ⇒ perfect symmetry
  - ⇒ imperfect symmetry or asymmetry
  - ⇒ patterns with intraphrasal/ intralineal stress clash
- in relation to a particular stress pattern combination
  - ⇒ repetition
  - ⇒ variation

* equal number of stresses
* similar gestalt characteristics

⇒ combination of unrelated stress pattern gestalts

(2) assigning metrical stress to a syllable

- rules governing stress on content words in relation to a varied rhythmic impetus (see (1))

  ⇒ polysyllabic content words in various collocations

  ⇒ monosyllabic content words in various collocations
- rules governing stress on function words in relation to a varied rhythmic impetus

  ⇒ polysyllabic function words in various collocations

  ⇒ monosyllabic function words in various collocations

(3) metrical grouping

- rules governing the coincidence of syntactic and metrical boundaries in relation to a varied rhythmic impetus
- rules governing the coincidence of lineal and metrical boundaries in relation to a varied rhythmic impetus.

Without pretending to completeness, this task list would, in some degree, enable us to render compatible the complex cognitive decisions by which we arrive at a metrical structure in English and German free verse. In other words, the above standardization formula may be regarded as sufficient for a statistical evaluation, although we cannot possibly cover all aspects involved in the establishment of a structural metre - in particular, the role played by semantics is too subtle to be expressed in rules of metrication. It seems that, beyond the translation-based comparison of metre demonstrated in this chapter, comparative metrics may still investigate further the rhythmic differences between English and German free verse. But the proof of the pudding is, of course, in the eating: whether our theoretical outline of a statistical approach will turn out to be useful in practice remains to be seen.

Conclusion

Free verse is no longer metrically unfathomable. Although it dispenses with a regular linear metre, and thus features no uniform principle by which its accentual patterns could be described, we have found a means of analysing the large variety of rhythms in free verse. For as we examine the complex cognitive process necessary to account for metro-rhythmic structures in metrically irregular poetry, we discover that the effect produced by variable stress patterns is closely related to their aural gestalt. Our theory of a free verse metre reveals, then, the rhythmic potential of different stress pattern gestalts. It offers to the reader of free verse an opportunity to metricize poetic language in a way which is congenial to his or her perception of linguistic rhythm. Different readers may, to a certain degree, differ in their interpretations of metrical patterns, and such differences need to be incorporated in the results of a detailed analysis. Yet, rather than blurring the outlook on metre in free verse, these metrical variants form an integral part of our rhythmic response to the accentual structures of a poem; they do not lead to the idiosyncrasy which characterizes so many performative approaches to free verse. Thanks to a firm theoretical foundation, structural metrics can be applied in a variety of different contexts: we have used its principles to assess the historical development of free verse, to establish a classification system for metrically irregular poetry, to discuss and evaluate the works by other free verse critics, and to compare English and German free verse on the basis of translations.

The metrical investigation into free verse rhythm is of some consequence to metrics in general, because it illuminates, from a cognitive point of view, the multifaceted process of establishing a poetic metre on the textual basis of a given poem. Take, for example, the most successful metrical structure in English poetry, iambic pentameter. This verse form has become so ensconced in the minds of poets from Chaucer to the present day that the linguistic realizations of its metre can vary considerably in their accentual structures. The notion of iambic pentameter is not only present in the regular and less regular five-stress patterns of verse lines by, say, Pope and Browning, respectively; it also haunts the free-versish poetry of writers as different as William Ernest Henley and Donald Davie; and occasionally it is even said to emerge in free verse proper. Thus, T.S. Eliot's dictum that "the ghost of some simple metre should lurk behind the arras in even the 'freest' verse" (1965: 187) openly invites the critic to refer to traditional metrical patterns in the analysis of *vers libre*. It is certainly possible, as Annie Finch (1993) has shown, to interpret some free verse poems by focusing on their sporadic appropriation of iambic pentameter, but such a method is by no means generally applicable. The metrist is particularly interested in examining the borderline between different metrical forms such as iambic pentameter and free verse. What are the criteria for a verse line to be recognized as iambic pentameter? This used to be the fundamental question of generative metrics, yet the answer in terms of an abstract pattern whose possible linguistic realizations are qualified by strict correspondence rules does not do justice to the highly variable manifestations of a pentameter-like verse form. A cognitive approach that juxtaposes the obvious characteristics of a metrical pattern with the accentual features of actual lines may yield more satisfactory results.

Test reading enables us to assess the metro-rhythmic impact made by each of the various criteria which characterize iambic pentameter. These criteria - five metrical stresses per line, ten syllables per line, and regular alternation between non-stresses and stresses - are not all equally relevant to our experience of linguistic rhythm. As

has been demonstrated in Chapters 1 and 4, the number of stresses per line and their structural distribution among the non-stresses are rhythmically most efficient, whereas the criterion of decasyllabicity plays a comparatively minor role in poetic rhythm. A line of verse which contains ten syllables is reminiscent of iambic pentameter, but this reminiscence does not suffice to elicit the corresponding rhythmic response. Unless we can actually sense five metrical beats in our recitation of the line, the notion of pentameter - let alone iambic pentameter - is either non-existent or unreal. There is, however, no unequivocally clear distinction between a decasyllabic line that may, and a decasyllabic line that may not, be regarded as pentameter. Test reading probes the metro-linguistic options for a five-stress pattern. It tries to answer the question: to what extent can a particular line be recognized as (iambic) pentameter? Yet, the final decision whether to accept or to reject a possible selection of five metrical beats is left to the reader, since the promotion or demotion of syllables can only be justified by a reader's need to experience a regular linguistic rhythm.

If a verse line is not particularly suitable for (iambic) pentameter, test reading finds out at what cost, linguistically speaking, a five-stress pattern can be imposed upon the given language material, and how far such metro-linguistic wrenching is acceptable to a reader's performative design. By way of example, let us examine a few lines from Donald Davie's poem "Mandelstam, on Dante (2)". It begins with a more or less satisfactory iambic pentameter:

> About the skies, you went wrong somewhere. Let
> (1) xXxXxXxXxX.

This metrication does not immediately reflect the natural linguistic stress pattern of the line, but its regularity can be maintained for two reasons in particular. First, it is semantically possible to select and emphasize "somewhere" rather than "wrong" as the principal word of the sentence. Second, the relative prominence of the monosyllable "wrong" compared to its predecessor, "went", need not be lost in a metrical rendering of the line, if we use the possibilities of intonation in order to lift the metrically unstressed syllable above the pitch of its stressed neighbours. Note that this is the only way to avoid awkward stress clashes; for the linguistically more appropriate alternatives of a pure stress metre - (1a) xXxXxxXXxX or (1b) xXxXxxXxX|X - feature an accentual hiatus either intraphrasally (1a) or in a caesural position, after the penultimate syllable, where an interruption of the metrical flow is most disturbing (1b). Thus, the assumption of an underlying iambic pentameter is justified despite the difficulties involved in a metrically inspired performance of the line.

Davie's lines never perfectly match the requirements of an iambic pentameter. He merely observes, in an eclectic and idiosyncratic fashion, the principle of five metrical stresses per line. Compare, for instance:

> Dantescan discuses, to clang directions! (l. 4),
> (4) xXxXxXxXxXx.
>
> Let us not then assign to you, no, let us not fit about your (l. 9),
> (9) xxXxxXxxXxxXxxXx.
>
> Better in your case if we should split your (l. 11),
> (11) XxXxXxXxXx.

Sent from the skies in your entire chest's heavings (l. 16),
(16) XxxXxXxXxXx.

None of these metrications is absolutely straightforward. In line 4, an inflexional ending ("discus*es*") calls for metrical promotion. The same device is needed to maintain the trochaic regularity of line 11, but here the prepositional emphasis ("in") appears slightly awkward in a semantic context which would normally demand stress on the fourth, not on the fifth, syllable and thus yield a metro-rhythmically compelling two-stress variation - (11) XxxXx|xXxX|x, or (11) XxxXx|XxxX|x. Line 9 demotes important monosyllabic words (particularly, "you", and "fit") to obtain the rhythm of an anapaestic pentameter sustainable in performance through special intonational techniques. Demotion and intonation also make possible the fairly regular metrical pattern in line 16, where a more natural stress structure would result in a polarization of stresses and non-stresses between the fifth and tenth syllables: (16) XxxXxxxXXXx. The difficulties arising from the attempt to metricize a supposed pentameter poem become even more conspicuous if a metro-rhythmic change occurs within a line rather than between lines:

That thus the distress which beat in on your ears, on your eyes
And the sockets of your eyes, be Florentine (ll. 7-8),
(7) xXxxXxxXxxXxxX
(8) xxXxXxXxXxX.

The anapaestic movement of (7) is continued at the beginning of the next line, yet, it soon shifts to iambic so as to preserve the appearance of a pentameter. A rhythmic reading which ignored the metrical rule of five stresses per line - for example, (8) xxXx|xxX|xXxx - would not only avoid the promotion of two syllables ("of" and "Florent*ine*"), but also produce an effective monostress variation.

By trying to interpret the rhythms of a poem in the metrically ideal form of a regular stress pattern, we explore the metrical malleability of a given poetic text. Test reading helps to control this exploration. It ensures that our delivery design does not assume the role of rhythmic arbitrator, but emerges as the product of interaction between a metre and its linguistic base. Rhythmized slogans of the Brechtian sort (see Brecht 1967: 399 ff.), which are scanned in a musical mode without recourse to specific language qualities, are incompatible with the concept of a perception-oriented metrics, where any stress patterns evolve as the result of trial and error. In order to test a particular verse segment for points of metro-rhythmic friction, we project on it an ideal metrical shape. Any points of friction must be in keeping with our notion of performance, that is to say, we must be able to account for any metro-linguistic mismatches intonationally, forfeiting neither our sense of an underlying metre, nor our concept of an acceptable recitation; otherwise a repetition of the test at a lower level of metro-rhythmic regularity becomes inevitable. It is patent that a linear metrical set presupposes a more highly organized accentual structure than does a metrical set which only extends over a syntactic phrase. In the above-mentioned poem, as well as in others (for instance, "Short Run to Camborne"), Donald Davie exploits the reader's expectation of (iambic) pentameter even to the extent of suggesting a five-stress line, however clumsy, where a phrasal grouping would yield a metre which, in spite of fewer or more stresses per line, is almost equally well structured and at the same time has the advantage of being easily conveyed in an

actual reading. The more easily a metre is established, the more varied are the possibilities of its realization in performance; for a metrical pattern that requires a great deal of intonational ingenuity in order to be sensed at all clearly restricts our options for different recitations.

While most poems are rhythmically controlled by one dominant mode of metre - whether linear as in traditional poetry, or variational as in free verse - some poems are metrically hermaphrodite: their accentual rhythms permit of a linear metre, yet a metro-rhythmic interpretation in terms of phrasal stress patterns seems to make better sense. (See, for example, D.J. Enright's poem "In Cemeteries", quoted in Chapter 4.) Although, in metrical grouping, the line takes precedence over any syntactic unit, the acceptance of one or the other as the basis of metrication depends to a certain degree on the test reading results. If we feel that, owing to awkward stress clashes or vigorously enjambed line endings, the mere possibility of stressing a fixed number of syllables per line does not produce the expected rhythmic response, we are at liberty to continue our quest for a more effective rhythm among the accentual structures of syntactically defined metrical units. It is absolutely essential to the metrical analysis of a poem on the border between conventional verse and free verse that both metres are accepted as equally valid; for the linear stress pattern is likely to reflect what appears to be the poet's deliberate decision in favour of a largely factitious metre, whereas the variational stress structure indicates the success or failure of a possibly unconscious rhythmic disposition. Test reading shows that the attempt to define iambic pentameter in opposition to all other kinds of verse, including non-iambic pentameter forms, is unavailing and inappropriate to the diversity of linear five-stress patterns. Even the criteria that distinguish metrically regular from metrically irregular verse are not always sufficient to unequivocally categorize a particular poem. Our cognitive approach fully acknowledges the complexity of rhythmic perception. It does not suggest a metrical pattern without giving argumentative support or propounding alternative metrications. There can, then, be no doubt that the theoretical foundation of free verse metrics may also contribute significantly to a better understanding of the metro-rhythmic structures in more traditional forms of poetry.

Although we have repeatedly pointed out that the theory evolved in this thesis is applicable to the free verse of English and German, it is not unlikely that the free verse rhythms of other languages, too, can be explained in the light of metrical variation. Indeed, the poetic output of virtually any language complies with certain perceptual exigencies of linguistic rhythm, if we assume that the human capacity for rhythmic experience is, from a biological point of view, not inextricably bound up with lingual cognizance. The rhythms of different languages, however, make themselves felt in different ways. Since our theory hinges on linguistic stress as the distinctive characteristic through which a rhythmic structure becomes manifest, the poetry of any language whose rhythms are governed by accentual patterns may potentially be amenable to the principles of structural metrics. English and German feature emphatic stress as a frequent rhythmic marker that subdivides a linguistic expression into perceptually isochronous sections, and enables us to shape a sequence of relatively more and less prominent syllables into metrically significant gestalts. By contrast, French accent, for example, is more dynamic: inbuilt, so to speak, in the intonational curve of an utterance, it tends to mark off a comparatively large number of syllables without suggesting the intrinsic formation of narrower stress patterns. Traditional metres, it is true, with their regular alternation of ictus and non-ictus, have been appropriated by the French language, yet the metrical analysis of French poetry

in terms of accentual structures seems to be linguistically rather inadequate. A language should have clearly recognizable emphatic stresses for our theory to become applicable.

The most obvious candidates may probably be found among other Germanic languages. Dutch, for example, whose phonology and grammar have much in common with German, complies almost certainly with the accentual needs of structural metrics. Among non-Germanic languages, Russian is of particular interest because of its marked lexical stresses. However, since each content word, whether monosyllabic or polysyllabic, features only one stress, the interstress intervals may contain a large number of unstressed syllables. M.L. Gasparov (1996: 202) writes: "The ratio of stressed to unstressed syllables in [English and German] is closer to 1:1, while in Russian it is 1:2." As a consequence, Russian poetry composed in traditional syllabo-tonic metres favours ternary measures. An iambic tetrameter, for example, is likely to fill some metrically strong positions with unstressed syllables; metro-rhythmic deviations of lexical stresses occurring in metrically weak positions, which are so characteristic of some English pentameter verse, become practically impossible in the context of a Russian syllabo-tonic measure. When, "at the turn of the twentieth century, there begins the reverse movement towards greater freedom in verse rhythm, away from strict syllabo-tonic structures, [...] it leads [....] forwards, towards pure tonicism, towards the *dol'nik*, *taktovic*, accentual verse" (Gasparov 1996: 237). Russian free verse, according to Gasparov (284), begins to "achieve some popularity only in the 1960s." Whether it can be analysed with the tools of structural metrics, depends on the general capacity of the language for a metro-rhythmically motivated promotion of linguistically unstressed syllables. Since a free verse metre emerges most readily if accentual clashes do not disturb our effort to achieve metrical regularity, Russian free verse seems to represent an interesting object for a metro-rhythmic investigation.

The application of our theory to the free verse of Russian, Dutch, or any other suitable language would yield further insights into the rhythmic potential of that language. It would illuminate how free verse utilizes the language-specific properties of accentual distribution and syntactic progression in order to produce a strong metro-rhythmic effect. Two aspects are especially relevant to the assessment of metrical differences between the free verse poems of different languages. First, a particular metrical gestalt will occur more frequently in one lingual environment than in another, because different languages prefer different stress patterns. Second, on account of lingually varying preferences for a particular metrical gestalt, the formation of that gestalt tends to require greater cognitive effort if a language contains relatively few of the corresponding linguistic structures than if a language agrees almost naturally with the patterns of the metrical ideal. Test readings would ensure that, in any suitable language, a free verse metre reflects the accentual exigencies of its lingual medium as much as it indicates the rhythmic potential of its linguistic base. In the light of these considerations, we may conclude that our theory of structural metrics can be advantageously employed in the metrical analysis of free verse other than English and German. Any practical research in this direction is likely to produce illuminating results.

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