

SHAWL CREEK
Teslin, Yukon Territory,
Canada

INFORMAL DISCOURSE ON POETICS AND PROSODY, VARIATION AND ELLIPSIS

I

The polarity between artist and critic is notorious, and debilitating. Even hardened criminals do not seem to save a special place in their hearts exclusively for the judge: perhaps because the professional knew in advance approximately which penalty was coupled with crime. And the finer of artists allow minimum time to critics who need answers to questions—bare minimum. Many artists are so outraged with reviewers that the repercussions are felt even in college classrooms. Many artists cumulatively destroy their art rather than become a source of delight to critics. Both artist and critic pay for this dearly. Neither command the respect they deserve, neither are considered professionals.

Definitions are always an area of concern. Average is always the numerically largest segment of any particular concern. The reviewer long ago realized his power lay not in his ability to advance an artist. He long ago realized that if he waited and reviewed only fine works of art, there would be hungrier mouths.

Artists as a body need critics. However, the difference between criticism as an area of scholarship, as an area of concepts and definitions must be distinguishable from criticism as only reviewing; and the critic armed with the purity and righteousness of his ideal must be distinguishable from the critic whose work compels him to postulate certain principles of syntax and grammar and rhythm and usage. The library of research and scholarship cost hundreds upon hundreds of lifetimes. Artists seem to have a tendency to distinguish two types: working definitions, pure definitions. Apprentices to reify.

The saving graces come from the most unexpected sources. The commercial artist is a constant source of quality, economy, and distinct applicability. The working definition is by nature general, and the pure definition (that deals with essence) quite specific. A working definition is useful according to the number of planes it has the ability to exist on. One working definition can be applied one infinite number of ways all traced to one source. A pure definition is most useful when speculating on a particular artist, movement, era, obsession, aspect. The classical tradition is merely an amoebic mass; the working definitions critics

and scholars have drawn from the finest of all literatures: the distinguishable sources of the fine art of writing.

A scholar can be used—like a precision surgical instrument—only if you know how. A martial artist (a most curious and enchantingly lethal warrior) studies regularly, reacts instinctively. Often with an awesome simplicity. Very close, to the source.

Definitions: drawn from works of art, drawn from artists, formulated after the fact—these constitute the single weapon that cuts the widest path. Their misapplication can be responsible for a century of decline in both scholarship and art. A nearly irreconcilable polarity is a contest of definition—not heart.

The alternative is the status quo. These emasculated masters of obedience, these unequaled castrati of the review, of course, theirs is always the first shriek of recognition. Or, as the saying goes, I do not like children—if I wanted to change diapers, I'd be a critic.

II

With every artist it is different, an almost incoherent ice. One finished work will involve radical variations of scattered and discontinuous principles. One manuscript will involve a seeming infinity of theoretical projections, rejections, suggestions. Artistic license is easily distinguishable from the degradation of liberty: all that is ruined is plastic, pastel, and paper. License is application that lacks a sufficient degree of certitude. A contemporary discovery of the effects of foregrounding certain theories or variations is license surged into a movement, into military exploration. License is not curious, it is suspicious: an irregular hinge, an arcane rhythm.

The contemporary artists, the life blood. They are bees convulsively curious of any new flower, cross-pollinating and dreaming of hybrids that would never occur to mother. The contemporaries have the viciously vivid reward of watching their art die before their bodies. The minor artists, produced every century, live a pocketful of generations. They cannot wield their own talent, only serve it. Major artists: genius. Not even peers amongst themselves. Too rare. Too raw. Too curious. Freaks that are treasured—once out of sight. Regardless of category, the fine artist is distinct from the artist: marked by the degree of substance in his work, and by the degree of structural integrity that substance has to the theme at hand; marked by the ability to produce works of fusion, continually; by the creation of a body of work, not an occasional sensation.

A different constellation of theories is relative to each complex in the process of being produced. Rules try to define absolute relationships and are in a constant state of modification; that British pronunciation and usage is now defined as a dialect is perhaps example enough. The method most consistent is to concentrate on the relative relationship that allows the deepest penetration of theme: the wielding of those theories.

Rules are extremely useful, immensely useful—but not ideally meant to be applicable in identical fashion in differing works. Again, a rule is a source and a working definition, and subject to all the laws of variation. A variation is a distinct form of application—it breaks nothing. The supreme power of variation is to transcend the precise definition; to have a definition expand to accept the variation as being fundamental.

Somewhere, from amidst the costumes of the middle ages, a verse tells of a professional soldier engaged in battle, a rapier piercing an enemy mortally; and the last action of this enemy, of this young man, was the sweep of his arm and the blow of his kiss before he fell to his death. And the professional, vowed, refused, to ever kill such an enemy again.

III

One of the exploratory procedures that persistently produces results is the employment of synonyms. Tension: a vague concept. To investigate an arena and to discover the methods and the apparatus applicable within, it is curious to demarcate synonyms. Combat is striking, slash is contiguous; strangle is tighter than choke; pierce sudden and press lingering. Bloat precedes rupture; an absence of circulation precedes dissipation. Stunned, pauses all progress and tension becomes collision or concussion. Tension in the distance, and on anon. Tension is one concept, a general descriptive term of a vast arena. Any specific area employed that subtly fails to realize its potential is very useful: the implication of the magnitude of failure becomes controllable. The obverse is only the principal side, only half.

If, a particularly large percentage of originality consists of the arrangement of equations and if for a moment we concentrate on this area (rather than the other large percentage which consists of formulating a complex in order to utilize a single curious equation) several distinctions emerge. Originality is particular as well as general: an author constantly adding another equation to his repertoire and constantly widening the range of his stock; a versatility of using essential devices in aerial ways: again, finding the distinctly intricate apparatus as a simplifier and a source of cohesion and brevity. Many artists are trapped into polishing their stock on ever more arabesque and grotesque themes, and in their belief in being profound or artistic. The same principal dancer is expected to perform every night.

Language is a distressingly limited continent. So many nouns, so many adjectives, so many writers. The artist has increasingly little choice but to become a bold theorist; schooled in antiquity and compelled to comprehend beyond his own century. His sharpest tool is theory: a heart is an old shoe that in this world will often only fit one foot, and intellect is an old man looking at an old friend and saying, "stout fellow".

It is not necessary to know what it is you are doing, or why you are doing it.

It is necessary to explore and to find the 'magnificent failures' and to produce what complexes have been entered with the utmost integrity of that complex kept intact. Art is not a personal achievement but a realization of what it is possible to find. Art has always been answers not to questions but to the fundamental curiosity of life. When an audience touches some depth, some height, some range they had never felt before, perhaps some artist had spent his life learning how to reach.

IV

Style is there, regardless of the degree of deliberateness, it exists regardless of intention. A fair case could be presented that an artist's intentions provide the clearest definition of the term 'historical irony'. The Toccata and Fugue in D minor was not meant to be mused over during a bubble bath; I admit.

In verse, style is the interplay between words, and the rhythm they create and are counterpointed against. Two rhythms dominate verse. First is the rhythm of the iamb—and its variations. Metrical composition maintains a relationship to the iamb either in terms of quality of obedience or quality of avoidance. Indeed, the term iambic composition would be more accurate than metrical composition (traditional): it is the conscious presence or absence of the iamb which determines geography. Melic scansion (scansion by measure) is strategic deployment of the iamb within a fused unit. The words themselves create through melody and cacophony, through concreteness and abstraction, through daintiness and weight, through density and fragility, through floridity and zero occupancy, and through all the various and sundry antitheses and combinations a distinct level of rhythm. This is counterpointed, counterpoised, or fused with the underlying iambic rhythm.

Therefore, style is divisible into two elements: diction and rhythm. Despite the bewildering number of by-products; a conscious change must be wrought in both elements if a writer is not to find himself instinctively imprisoned by his own habits of perception. Many styles automatically limit the number of themes and techniques, and limit to a far greater degree the methods of approach. The saying 'the style is the man' also points out that stylized habits are not merely limited to artistic perceptions. Deeply intellectual or highly emotional dictions; animated visuals or gently weaving abstractions; rugged or suave contours: verse dictions are sardonically similar to the denominations of a spiritual system. A mind has an habitual vocabulary, this becomes an enfeebling inability: vocabulary too often predetermines mode and equipment. One life, one style, safe and secure; at last: then—polish, polish, polish.

The subjective style is at once the poorest and the richest of modes: poorest if all themes are slanted in one direction, richest if the author is capable of imbuing his intellect and his emotion with any colour he chooses; poorest, for even the finest writer becomes a chronicler of his ideas and passions; richest, if the

part remains utterly instinctively itself and structural relationships betray an awesome logic. The finest style is true not to the work, not to the man—but to the part.

V

The substantial gain of a thorough apprenticeship is seen in the work, such as that of a cabinetmaker, where what is not visible is often what is most important; where the deepest respect is not of the medium, but of the wood. A thorough apprenticeship allows one to grasp more than his own intellect, to express more than his own heart. The superb apprentice is breathtaking, the wildest of all promises: not a star; so ready to blot out the night. Artists are too easily awed: the countless examples of fine art based on naive theory.

Often, technical developments arise from the theorist who traces the histories of the applications of techniques and continues onto the next logical step, or notes the missing element. Nearly all art is just theory clamoring for a new dress; only rarely, a new and naked howl. Theory, is feminine. Theory slowly matures, becomes noticed, becomes pregnant, ages, disintegrates. Theory is cyclic, not czar.

There is such a thing as too much knowledge, far far too much data. A foundation so solidly theoretical as to obliterate all instinct. An artist who finally wails, "I could be the greatest lover the world has ever known, if I could only get it hard."

There exist studies (e.g. cummings) which explore an innocence of syntax, an inherent immaturity of organization and cohesion: this mode allows meaning to dominate an utterly fragile background. Most theories strive to allow each part (rubato, stanza—theme) to be developed to full potential. It is to be remembered maimed or wounded or ruined, or blossoming parts, leave subtler traces of themselves, drow indistincter hues. Here is where strict classicism is immeasurably valuable, for the ability to gauge the distance of certain kinds of innocence or the depth of certain types of wound when this is taking place within a dry theoretical part (punctuation) it is necessary to know the full potential of that part when used at maximum strength. Classicism is the foundation that allows the most utterly experimental of theories the widest possible range. Again, remember, it was devotion which produced the equations, the atomic bomb.

Verse, is a medium. Verse is the most utterly compressed of all mediums of art. It is capable of the fiercest and most direct form expression or idea is capable of. There is no power and there is no subtlety verse cannot outlast. The memory of civilization, where else could it be stored.

VI

There is an essential difference between variation and mutation and both have a necessary and fundamental function. The purpose of mutation is to explore

the relationships of principal structural laws: most of the implications of the word are feared and consequently seldom systematically explored. A nuclear holocaust will, of course, allow complete systematization. Mankind abhors, what nature has always utilized: the insect world. If the play 'principal structural principles' will be allowed, it is useful to show the fundamental function of mutation as it applies to literature, as it has always applied to literature. Indeed, the concept of an ideal state of the art is glaring idiocy.

A seemingly easy contrast is the modular Ciceronian period and Surrealism. The term 'principal structural principles' as applied to the Asiatic period, colon, and comma is evident. The variation of these principles as applied to their relative relationships produces the Senecan or Attic style; the same principles reapplied but with essential changes of degree. Now termed, by some, classical and baroque. Precisely because structure is an actuality: perfection of structure is possible; dissection of structure is possible; animation, agitation-states of structure are possible. A brilliant liquid metaphor, an hysterical shattered metaphor; a scream of rage, a scream of fear: a contrast of degree. A submerged metaphor or a reversed metaphor is a variation. However, a complete absence of metaphor, metonymy, and the zeugmas from an otherwise perfectly cast series of Ciceronian periods can be a mutation. Underlying fundamental elements are missing and the 'unstated effect' is shattering. This is very very useful. Very applicable. Surrealism explores states of the mind, not merely unconscious ones. Mutation is a principle of addition, subtraction, and disruption. Another obvious example would be a metrically cast rhythmical structure that crouched and paused, and leaped, underlying, a confused and frightened theme that ended in pointless dissipation.

The most mutilated saying in the english language, "the point is": it does not matter to theory. Theory is inanimate abstract principle. Verse is ink, arranged in such and such a way on rag paper. Struggle all our life, shatter your heart—verse cannot respond, theory cannot respond. An artist may have a relationship with his audience, but he cannot have one with his art. A musician cannot become intimate with an organ: an instrument cannot respond to the touch, the touch responds to the instrument. Amplification of a vibration is not a response. Except to the mystic, and while we all wait. . . Obedience, variation, mutation: the three basic states of a structure.

And despite Ruskin, the inflammation of one principle of a structure is noticeable: there are 360 degrees to any point, all equally valid. The inability to wield theory is the touchstone of average art. The inability to distinguish the applicable range is the touchstone of average criticism. The average judge is a menace.

VII

The contour of the melodic line; the harmonic density of meanings; the structural interplays and surges and progressions of rhythm: free verse has yet to capture this, and is at present still unable to define a free poetics. Melody

is now free, harmony is now free and what rhythm verse still possesses is loose.

The one signal theoretical problem facing english writers of verse this century, is opera. For all the extraordinary talent that english literature so flamboyantly displays—as a language we have always failed to unlock opera. If the weakest link of our literary chain is the art song, and it is, then perhaps the explanation of the confused awe of twentieth century verse also lies here. No language as strong and varied as english will rally to a century whose brilliance lies in a Yeats and an Eliot. The novel and the short story have made enormous strides in the last hundred years, and every step they took left verse farther behind. Until suddenly, literarily, verse is our weakest link; and four hundred years of infirmity and miscarriage, define opera, for us. From prehistory song and verse have been almost inseparable words, have underlaid each others semantic meanings. Twentieth century verse in terms of mood, intellect, and imagery—does not even hum.

Even the word opera elicits yawns, is considered too cultured, “less water, more whiskey”. In english, song is equated with tune, not with the deepest cries of the english spirit. The hierarchy of seriousness has changed hands several times. Verse Dominated, Drama Dominated, and now the novel dominates the literary scene. Verse has not been demoted to a subdivision of literature, that is simply the position it can barely hang on to. A single novel can earn as much capital as a decade of modern verse.

These are not digressions from the subject of opera, these are the results of the fundamental failure of our verse in this medium, of the fundamental distance of our verse from its source. Or is that a pretentious statement, and english intellect and english heart a gnawed bone, a dry calendar of bloodless fact.

There is something in us who use this language, something in us that somehow was born on that island. We curse her like family. We laugh at this old lady. We mock this old lion. There was a time when England roared and the earth shuddered, when she was one of the most powerful nations the world has ever known. One of the most beautiful. But no one ever called England a siren. No one ever sailed across her oceans to listen to her song. A serious woman, a powerful woman, a woman whose children roamed the earth, whose voice can still be heard in every corridor of the world. A woman who never melted in song.

Answers lie in weakness as often as in the further development of strength. For raw power our language is second to none. For sleek description, for accurate construction, for the logic of commerce, for brevity—a language develops in accord to the demands made. Demand, coerce, outwit, and dazzle—and call it diplomacy. The english Language has not covered continents through its ability to sing. And english verse must now learn, or this very young language, will decline.

Perhaps this signal theoretical flaw, this hamartia, will bring the genius of this Language to frailty, decay, and finally dust. Perhaps these are digressions, perhaps when it comes to opera—that is all England is capable of.

VIII

The barbaric cut, the brutal pause—the utter fragility, the hesitant touch; the authority, the demureness, the rage, the weep; and the wean—one technical achievement separates verse from the oral composition of the ancients; one technical achievement is brutaler, demurer: line-division. Call their epics stichic verse, their songs stanzaic verse, but only by qualifier. By the same construction we need not say concert flute, but must say traditional.

The ability to structurally isolate: the verse paragraph, and therefore the dominance of methods of amplification and of strictly repetitive devices, reigned: the punctuation of oral compositions, especially epics, is an exercise in pure speculation, an irreversible alteration: the modern mind thinks in sections, not in storms. To the ancients the concept of verse carried an entirely different set of structural implications. A lack of cohesion confuses the modern, overwhelmed the ancient: line-division may first have been grasped by those most terrifying of priests who inscribed the words of the spirits of the dead, those priests who taught numbers and stars to the Lords, those priests who understood the famines and the plagues and the Gods. Those priests whose answers were as sharp and brief as the cuts of lightning through storms.

Locked into the modern mind is the visual impression of verse as the exploitation of the line. Locked into the soul of criticism are the concepts of accents per, syllables per, contours and contrasts per, interplays between, and organizations of the line. Verse, on the whole, no longer moves from paragraph to paragraph of thought. The ode and the sonnet are structures designed to maximize the interplay of line and paragraph: when the distinct paragraph structures fall out of favor, verse is in a period of disruption and transition.

Line-division: as soon as the heroic couplet dominated—the final step became frighteningly obvious. The Romantic Movement could be theoretically discussed as the only possible, and temporary, escape that theorists would envision. The strength of the novel steadily increased with each decade; and verse slowly, conversely, lost authority. We speak of Romantic poets, Victorian novelists.

The genius of Dickinson is strubbornly skirted, despite the chronological fact that since Milton no single writer in this medium had her power, not in english. The fundamental ability of verse is to compress idea and expression into distinct structure. Dozens are more pleasing than Dickinson, dozens displayed more skill. No one in any language is more fundamental. There is no genius superior to hers, only prettier, only more roaming, only less stark. This eccentric old woman of white, was tighter than Shakespeare, tighter than Hebrew, tighter than life. Utterly locked, into the line. Naturally, most of her work had to fail. Emily Dickinson is the unique voice, no one sounds like her. No one, touches her.

Terror of terrors. Line-domination, the breaker of artistic backs. The reaction to this stage of theoretical evolution was, in theory, brilliant. Free verse demanded the allowance of cadences; all discipline was called upon to justify itself. The anathema was embraced. It was realized that even undisciplined motion

could be structurally employed. Not since oral composition had cadence assumed a role of such importance. The ballast was thrown overboard, obviously, chaos had to ensue.

IX

Fusion is either fine art or the intensest of cries. Or a stipulative definiendum. The Ancient Greeks loved the epigram, continuously turned to the epigram. The medieval sonnet became an international concern, fast. Amidst all the questions of what art is, the drama continues, over twenty centuries, or is it thirty. How long have painters been mauling that one piece of cloth. How much wilder ecstasy and shyer delicacy are locked into one ballet, fused into one evening of movement. Compare free verse.

Perfect unity is a consistent feature of most free verse, absolutely no part is distinct. Prose can be clausal stress, verse is syllabic stress: prose is constructional, verse is structural. Apply the principles of verse, remove line-division—not the prose poem, not symphonic prose—the verses of the *Bible*. There is no room for prose in verse, it is a mistake to lock prose into verse. Structured as verse prose is dismembered. This becomes a very useful variation for both mediums but a structural principle of neither. In iambic composition cadence is an enormously effective variation, a wild free movement. Cadence the vine, metrics the castle; the fire of fear. The burning question is cadence. All of verse is now burning.

For cadence to be used—structurally: it must be immersed within a highly charged atmosphere of repetitiveness bordering on incantation or chant; or, and this is immensely more difficult, it must be counterpointed, counterpoised, or fused with the metrical rhythm—and, have a metrical structure underlying all but its most uncontrollable syllables; or, it must be awfully brief. In the five millennia behind our shoulders the myriad of methods is traced to these three sources. Structurally, cadence has one other source (no methods distinguishable, only rare occurrences): variation as the structural principle, with no underlying foundation; no other application is as fragile, as filigree.

The breakdown of foundational rhythm is thus: scansion by foot, the traditional method; melic scansion, the metrically analyzable progression of one measure; cadence, a melic progression that continues beyond the confines of a measure to become the distinct rhythm of a phrase, and by extension, of a clause. The Antinomy: only syllabic stress can overpower the phrase; only the phrase can overpower syllabic stress. Again, verse is syllabic stress; foundational rhythms may be classified as one of three types: foot, measure, phrase; or, iambic, melic, cadent.

Verse in the narrative mode utilizes predominantly iambic rhythms. Verse in the lyric mode utilizes predominantly melic rhythms. The oratorical mode is predominantly cadent rhythms. Prose becomes highly affected if cadent rhythms openly predominate, because cadence is syllabic stress.

Free verse was an exigent, perilous, military expedition; regardless of the original ideal, free verse is now line-structured prose. Not since the dark ages has a century of verse been so barren.

The reason the last hundred years has studied cadence is themes cast in a striking new rhythm acquire strikingly new implications. It is nearly suicide to ignore free verse; it is nearly suicide to ignore metrics: the inability to control line-divisions is death, regardless of choice. Line-division is behind all this, not artists, not critics, not audiences. It is just theory shifting. Somehow iambic pentameter echoed or was valiantly absent from all our verse. Monoid pentameter had ossified, had ceased to be viable as a dominant structural principle. It could not be replaced, in two weeks.

Free verse very often is the study of the devouration of the part by the whole. There are two sides to an equation: unity does not only mean no part does injury to the whole, it also means the whole does not do injury to any part. One very tight cadence in the midst of a needlessly line-structured form is not verse of any kind. Strict progressions of metrically scannable melic composition expanding with distinct centroidally distinguishable cadences—is difficult. The horror is—only a lyricist finds it instinctive. Melic is the rape of narrative law.

There are a score or more reasons for the termination of a line, melic composition allows less. Cadence allows less. Traditional western scansion: alexandrine, blank verse, ottava rima; these were designed basically for narrative composition. The confusion is not metrics versus free verse, but narrative versus lyric. Indeed, cadence is an extension of melic design—it is merely a logical development. Free verse, and cadence—replace nothing. Verse does not need the twentieth century to set it free.

The novel is now the home of narrative, prose is now the medium of narrative. To dismember a body is not to free it. The lyric, as ever, eludes grasp. It lives in vastly varied rhythms. In anisometric lines. In episynthetic measures. The lyric is to a structure, what metaphor is to a mind.

X

It has often been stated that free verse is not prose and the prose poem is not verse. It may be offered however that theoretical distinctions can always be postulated for any construction that adheres to structural principles. A style of verse is distinct from a structure of verse. Socratic Irony appears a lazy series of questions, the structure of logic does become apparent. Style, at present, does not allow the structuralization of its essence; style may be immersed, fused, or superimposed on nearly any structure. Substance is louder than sound: if after a century not one single precise distinction is applicable with exactitude it is time to begin an exploration of free verse not as an intangible anomalous system, but as a literary style. Often, as a style of low concentration and little rigor; a style that cannot imbue the finer structures where brevity and fusion

are mandatory. A style quietly similar to Ancient Greek in bareness, yet wholly without a conspicuous reserve of power.

The value of free verse is beyond question, the persistency of fine art realized in such fashion is highly suspect. The history of literature is of change. The century plus of free verse has produced a minimum of consistent achievement and a maximum of consistent deficiency a mechanical response is inevitable to a colorless stimulus of such long standing; a stylized stimulus antithetical to Baroque and therefore elusively uncaricaturizable. Time for a change, any change, but hopefully one better able to distinguish the artist from the apprentice.

When retrograde development, for a hundred years, ceases to be droll: our once proudest art. Each language is distinct; a stunning principle in one is always somehow applicable in another, though not always structurally. Verse has earned, in english, a decline in respect unprecedented. The exaltation of the free, the conversationable, the ordinarily human, the undisciplined artist. Personally, I miss the spectacle of vanity, of rage, of anguish, of daring; the sheer raw achievement verse has always displayed.

XI

To become structure is to transcend structure; to grasp is to employ. Perhaps this in part explains the richness of verse and its tendency, chronologically, to compass. The rampant creativity of an age, the literal explosion of greatness into an era, the immediate approach of nearly utter cessation. The impregnable advance of theoretical concepts accumulated by generations of contemporary artists is pierced, finally, by conscious instinctive theorists. Suddenly, instead of the talents of an age each following and exploring a strand of serpentine theory, structure after structure is being realized and very rapidly perfected. The domains of these structures seem to exhaust within an age. Nearly the proceeding generation seems faced with the challenge of surpassing the theorists and the instinctive talents immediately preceding them; are under the spur. Then, structures and themes seem exhausted; theory seems drained; diction, depleted.

A theorist need not depend on originality, but has simply to outwrite others within a sphere of speciality to become a model of any particular existing structure or mode; he does have that advantage. Yet, the current structures will not contain the equations he is capable of; thus new structures are born and existing structures transcended. After a certain degree there is no competition, no peers; only unique eras. Utilizing everything at any stage of development, seeing everything in a new light, genius is far more than great works of art, it is theory in awe. And often awesomely practical.

If truth is the sole criterion of art—truth is awfully malleable. Percentages are more useful when discussing any theoretically vital working definition: too tight a control does not allow laws. One in a million, one in a hundred, one in ten; odds like three-in-seven pay continuously: it is rarer theory that often

realizes the unusual equations. Law can be, the particular structure that allows energy to exist in a particular state. A single structure is capable of numerous distinct states. Rules define existing states, not existing structures. Follow rules and only emulation is possible. Rules are too seldom distinguishable from principles, often even when scholastically differentiated. Too many writers are construction-locked, lacking the ability to even cross-reference terms beyond their usual perimeter.

Co-evolution is continuously employable. A lyric is usually locked in laws: laws of growth; laws of maturity; laws of mutation; laws of pathology; laws of disintegration. The lyric is the juxtaposition of principles into unsophisticated structure; verse is juxtaposition into working structure. In the lyric all elements are structural, in most verse compressible devices link structural elements. The lyric is not an intensely human cry; nuclear energy is not a bomb: explosiveness is merely one application of structures composed of compression.

XII

Strict constructions apply to the letter of the law; law, to the letter. Note how even the Romantics with their penchant for, their amulet of, spontaneity and freedom were willing to apply the most rigorous enforcements of their ideals. To the Neoclassicist an intellect pouring out emotion at a particular price per line was clearly prostitution. To the Romantic a cold calculating skill, a dissectedly polished style, was whoredom. To the modern the immediate concern is why must evil be expressed only in feminine terms; cannot one ever remember all these words originally applied only to men: the only function of verse is to be expressive: only an image matters. Or are these caricatures, definitions based on numerically obvious manifestations. If so, what was the genius of Baroque, of Rococo. Does a definition define the caricature, the ideal, or the roots of a theory? Are ornate tracery and intricate filigree beyond function, never essential? Is any age of less value: can realization define potential?

Verse is stunningly adaptable. Verse allows itself to be arranged. Even arranged into an endless series of antitheses, each valid almost only to the extent it is willing to contradict. Almost any idea or expression can be compressed into a structure. Verse is not to language what mathematics is to law, verse is a mathematical arrangement of elements, law being more or less useful. A vessel does not realize whether or not water is catholic. How do we differentiate the ability to hold attention from the ability to confine curiosity. Perhaps by calling it reaction to structure.

Poetry and poet are quality terms that are of little value in a theoretical discussion; they do note a peculiarity of language in that the general terms applicable are verse and writer. So long as quality terms are used to denote the average manifestation the concept of born artist will reign, and the born artist will rarely realize early enough the cardinal law of apprenticeship. Instinctive discipline

and disciplined instinct are synonyms that self contain their own antonyms: the double edged sword is burdensome to the wielder who utilizes only one side, and useless to someone who only pierces. Previous ages viewed in mystical and superstitious ways, writers of power and words from the Gods. The prophecy of the ancients, the living spirits of the dead. And those who create awe, and those who create law.

XIII

Device to apparatus, method to procedure, equation to formula. Believe utterly in any system, they all work. The next era always discovered the insidious disease of the former, created in immunity. How many theories are developed in reaction, with no larger view than a new formula; a new image to worship, a new symbol. Writing is not Christianity, poetics is not the theology of verse; there is no inviolable law, there is no way.

Theory is far ranging, from Beauty is Truth, to the old saying that you find the one thing in the whole world people do not want, and you give it to them. The Greeks were brilliant, so overpowering that to this day the word Greeks still brings to mind the beginnings of intellect, and heart. Brings visions of a mythology that was common knowledge only a handful of decades ago. The principles of formulation, of digging up a bone and realizing a skeleton, perhaps this was their greatest gift. If one city could be free, chaos could be unlocked. The term 'formula' is highly frowned on in these modern days, the overexploitation of a restricted number of formulae seems too characteristic.

To vastly oversimplify: A series of interrelated images is a cluster, a series of interdependent equations is a complex. A formula is a complex or the fusion of a series of complexes. Originality is a matter of equations, usually. Literally, hundreds of equations are possible and of these only several will be structurally plausible at the juxtaposition of the crucial points. Preceding structural principles will be contiguous. Easy so far. A curiosity, a fascination of exploring, a sensitivity of not directing but of following—structure is a dynamic principle, truthfully, it gets lost. And here is the rare gift—the ability to see into the complex and into the cluster, to find the equations to fulfill it. Every equation is valid, at least once.

The brevity and the compression and the economy of Ancient Greece, that universe of cities will always be memorable. The incomparable discovery of the riotous array, the stellar frenzy of fundamental principles.

XIV

Viewed in its range artistic theory seems able to justify itself: seems able to cite numerous examples, numerous eras, numerous artists from the numerous languages of the world; numerous justifications for the numerous theories themselves. Not in sophistry but in honest defense. Suppose—it was all valid.

Art is the Ideal Beauty beyond the visible world; art is that subdivision too ornamental to be considered rhetoric. At the extreme limits of the extreme points lie theoretical concepts that are, well, extreme. This is a great deal different from labeling these ideas and equations non-applicable, and certainly utterly different from labeling them invalid. Remember: the true artist, the true critic, the true audience.

Art is the expression of pure emotion: the purpose of art is to delight by instructing: the greatest of all poems is the poet himself: imagine—the Marquis de Sade of Aesthetics.

Art has no greater duty than to be pleasing—to be the finest moments of the finest minds—to be lucid to the least common denominator—to be universal—to be Alexander Pope to be the shows of things—to be the recollection of an emotional orgasm—to embrace the infinite I Am—to be the great heave of the bardic breath—to be a symbol of all this—to aspire to pure sound—is wish fulfillment—is ingenious nonsense. All these theories seem to express the effect—on the artist or on the audience. Art is an act of communication. . . et al.

To me myself, personally—art is a realization of theory. The reason for diversity is the number of valid theories. The reason a fine dramatic work slips into oblivion and a nursery rhyme remains fresh—is theoretical competition: each theoretically distinct arena will preserve its finest specimens. The key to lasting recognition is to realize what is lastingly recognizable. The key to theoretical evolution is familiarity with structural principles. The key to the historical interrelationship of theoretical value and technical apparatus is the capacity to absorb—to study. The key—for me myself, personally—was when my teacher she said only to study what I find most curious, to become a follower. What makes an artist austere is a rubber stamp marked 'valid'.

XV

Meaning: in certain types of verse the feeling or emotion means more than its intellectual content, in other types sound patterns, visuals, moods, atmospheres—as a dictionary notes: meaning is what is primarily conveyed. Meaning is not confined to intellectual or didactic ends. Meaning and structure are con-substantial. Every aspect, every application of meaning can be captured. This is why the art survives, the co-mingling of meanings inherent. It is precisely the lack of a central doctrine. The infinite variation of structure. Religion, eroticism; idealism, decadence; beauty, deformity. To which does verse seem more faithful? Intensity, peace; emotion, intellect; rage, love. Which does verse better express? What other medium allows them all to compress their meanings so accurately?

Delirious as it may sound, the dividing line between fine art and fine attempt is ellipsis. Ability is to manipulate and exploit ellipsis at potential; to intuit and perceive ellipsis as the cardinal figure. The capacity of a structure to absorb massive concentrations of space and to interpenetrate explosions of brilliance with

implosions of force; the ability to expand and contract the spatial perimeter that configurations of energy are operative within: the gift of sequence of scene, sequence of emotion, sequence of idea, and sequence of word all fused by one principle. Energy is only the obverse side: energy can only be structurally confined: concentration and dissipation are determined by the applicable perimeter.

The perennial question has become, what is poetry. In a quality term it is quality that is to be defined. Therefore, poetry is verse or a mode of verse that aspires to, yet magnificently fails, or attains the appellation of a fine and lasting work of art. Quality is judged by contemporary standards, historical standards, and theoretical standards: the highest accomplishments are possible only to the artist who clearly exploits all three. The fine artist does not ignore rich sources of material. The theoretical comprehension of what art is, of course, is a great aid to inspiration. Even by extension, 'poetry in motion', the term refers to an artistic quality imbued by the fulfillment of structural integrity. Since the very beginning: poetry is a problem of substance; verse is a problem of structure. Again, substance and structure are consubstantial. Remove substance, and structure is of fragile beauty. Remove structure, and substance is sand. Here, only verse can give life.

From a standpoint of pure utility—how many volumes of Pindar have been sold—how long was the clipper ship viable? Transport is a root, transportation is a root and suffix. From where do we trace the impetus of language, of design? Conversely—the current truism that those who can—do, and those who can't—teach: Anne Sullivan fought a war, refused to do anything for Helen Keller. She could tear her own soul in half, but some things Anne could not do.

I can sum fifteen years of structural studies quite briefly; I can contain all I have been taught and all I have explored, concisely. There are five études; line through descending cinquain.

SWOBODNA ROZPRAWA O POEZJI I PROZODII, O WARIACJI I ELIPSIE

STRESZCZENIE

Całość rozprawy ma cechy swobodnego eseju, w którym zdania o charakterze naukowym przeplatają się ze zdaniami o charakterze poetyckim. Sposób wyrażania jest niezwykle skondensowany, czasem eliptyczny, co czyni pracę trudną do czytania. A jednak — po wnikięciu w niełatwą do przekładu specyfikę językowo-terminologiczną — rozprawa ta okazuje się wybitnie oryginalna i wydaje się bardzo cenna jako próba powszechnej syntezy problemów praktyki i teorii literackiej i artystycznej.

Redakcja