On the Fighting Forms of Shapes and Echoes: Reading Esemplasticity in the Metasonnetry of E. A. Robinson as a Poetics of Ecstasy

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Duplexity: *Fighting Forms*

As ‘twixt two equal Armies, Fate (Donne 46)

The above line from “The Ecstasy” by John Donne would serve as an apt title for *Kämpfende Formen*, Franz Marc’s late painting, possibly his last, whose title, in English, is *Fighting Forms*. Now housed in Munich’s Pinakothek der Moderne, *Fighting Forms*, created at the outset of the First World War, remains a striking work (F. Levine 157). And striking is the word. Though ostensibly continuing Marc’s interest in colorfully rendering scenes of animals, *Fighting Forms*, as the title makes clear, is no idyllic pastoral. Indeed, the painting is deeply unsettling. Its fighting forms are abstracted yet representative enough to appear as birds of prey, most likely eagles, diametrically opposed. At left, one, red, is in the throes of attack; at right, the other, black, cowers backwards. Emanating from these sanguine and ashen forms are garish colors that might otherwise, as elsewhere in Marc’s work, signal the beauty and bounty of life. Here, the vomitous violets, jaundiced yellows, and sickly greens, against the foreground of reds and blacks, evoke a conflagration. Curiously, those selfsame garish colors—the violets emanating from the black form at right and the yellows and greens emanating from the red form at left—seem less as a static background and more as kaleidoscopic extensions of the fighting forms themselves. These haunting shapes and echoes, with regards to the experience of reading verse, will be introduced in the next chapter, “Encounters of Sonnetry,” to illustrate the duplex origins of poetic ecstasy.

Alongside these intensely colorful extensions of the fighting forms, unsettling, too, is the depiction here of the moment *before* the moment: Marc elected to capture, like the forever frozen figures of action on Keats’ Grecian urn, the fighting forms before the fighting actually begins (Keats 282 – 284). Poised at the moment before its first strike, the red form lunges as

the black recoils. This communication of dynamic instance in stasis, an action at its metaphorical precipice, heightens the viewer's sense of the bloodlust of the red and the abject terror experienced by the black. The appositions of these two abstracted forms, then, confer opposing emotions. The viewer of the painting toggles between the two forms, unable to take both in at once, and wonders at what point, to coopt the language of quantum physics, the symmetry will break. Symmetry breaking, as such, has an analogue in the reading of verse as when, as will be discussed in a later chapter, "Appositions of Metaphor," dyads of poetic artifice break symmetry to emerge as a novel, complex, and sometimes synesthetic poetic form. What should be noted here is the effect of this toggling on the viewer or, in the instance of poetry, the reader. As such, Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms* depicts the nature of poetic duplexity, where two discrete forms, in the experience of the reader, become a uniquely singular form. This resulting dyad, then, in apposition to other dyads, is intrinsically and continually dynamic. Through verse, music affords a model in this respect: In "Liebeslied," or "Love Song," Rainer Maria Rilke describes lovers as akin to the vibrating strings of a violin, empowering one another and, together, creating something new (Rilke 432). Such a trope is not far removed from that of the intertwining eye-beams in "The Ecstasy" by John Donne, the poem whose martial imagery introduced this discussion of fighting forms and poetic duplexity (Donne 46).

In the case of Rilke, the two strings of the violin, inciting one another, sound together to strike something new—a chord redoubled to transcend the mere simultaneity of two notes. In a like way, returning to Marc's *Fighting Forms*, we might consider those aforementioned violets to the right of the canvas: They, too, are duplexities—dyads of red and blue paint, which might well be further compounded by additional dyads of black and white. These two examples, of ear and eye, help us to perceive duplexity as a synesthetic coupling of forms from which novel forms emerge, only to couple and emerge again *ad infinitum*. So general a

definition, of course, can accommodate the concept of duplexity as an expression in many fields, not least biology, as Ezra Pound notes in the first chapter of his *ABC of Reading*: "The proper METHOD for studying poetry and good letters is the method of contemporary biologists, that is careful first-hand examination of the matter, and continual COMPARISON of one 'slide' or specimen with another" (Pound, *ABC* 17). At least one such comparison that serves as a ready analogue between biology and poetry with regards to the concept of duplexity resulting in complexity is self-evident. In sexual reproduction, genes of two individual organisms, through the recombination of DNA's strands of double helixes, come together to create a novel third, which possesses qualities of both yet also differs from both. That new individual, genetically speaking, is akin to Marc's painting in that a dyad lies within a single work, creating a permanent state of dynamic tension. Vision, too, embodies this idea of duplexity. While both left and right eyes offer sight within a given (and sometimes overlapping) field, they, together, meld these fields in the brain to create stereoscopic vision and depth perception. Similar dyads of duplexity abound in anatomical studies: Think of hands playing the ukulele, alternately fingering and strumming, or the atria and ventricles of the heart beating in tandem.

These duplexities occur in the physical sciences as well, which, to our purposes in delineating the means by which poetic ecstasy is experienced by the reader (or listener) of poetry, seem even better tailored as analogies. From quantum physics, the concept of entanglement, which Albert Einstein famously called "spooky action at a distance," posits that the discrete particles of a dyad inevitably affect one another across space and time (Laughlin 51 – 53; Scarani 75 – 76). This, to be sure, differs tellingly from the assertion of our biological trope of offspring as variations of their parents. Whereas sexual reproduction randomly selects attributes from one organism or its partnered other in the creation of offspring, entanglement, though it might well be seen as a dyad dwelling in a single

relationship, is more closely akin to the model of dialogue: A particle affects its partnered other, changing it, in effect, into something that it had not been until the interaction; then, that particle interacts with its entangled partner, changing it, too, into something it had not been before. This never-ending process of mutation, if you will (to mix metaphors yet again), highlights how dynamic even the interactions of just two elements can be. When additional particles are brought into the mix, further complexity ensues. Or, rather, complexities ensue—for the dyads of duplexities that become entangled with a novel element are then rendered themselves as a dyad of duplexity. This astonishing claim begs the question: How does this apply to a reader's experience of poetry? Indeed, how duplexity and its dynamic nature, which affects the experience of linguistic features and literary conventions of a poem, work to bedazzle the reader of poetry into an ecstatic state is the subject of this dissertation, whose focus will be considered through a prism of a philosophy of dialogue and the poetics of a single poem, a metasonnet by E. A. Robinson.

So, having established that duplexities exist in both the organic and inorganic worlds, we see how these seemingly simple dyads are dynamically charged, much in the manner that two interlocutors in the throes of meaningful discourse are dynamically charged. We have also implicitly discovered that these dyads, as building blocks for larger structures, can, as in how fertilization unlocks profound changes of growth, become superstructures with emerging networks of such complexity as to make their humble twosome origins seem incredulous. Such phenomena are also present in the experience of language in manifold ways. Additionally, what holds true for language at large also holds true for poetry, which itself is a construct of language. Indeed, conventions of poetic form, as Frederick Turner and Ernst Pöppel convincingly argue in "The Neural Lyre: Poetic Meter, the Brain, and Time," not only complement but further compound the role that duplexity plays in the reader's experience of a poem, whose effects of enriched esemplasticity ultimately induce an ecstatic state (Turner

and Pöppel 93 – 94). Perhaps more pedestrian interactions with language have dulled our percipience of poetic artifice. The language of email at work and advertising on television, for instance, is ubiquitously prosaic. The sheer omnipresence of such drabness can lull us into a sense that poetic artifice, while florid, is inconsequential. Hence, readers grow accustomed to think of language in the manner that pre-Newtonian observers did of white light—believeing it to be a brilliant monolith rather than the continuum of color we know it to be.

Before looking closer at poetry (and E. A. Robinson's metasonnet in particular), let us recall how duplexities are manifested in everyday language. To begin with, language might be viewed as a medium between interlocutors. Whether speaker to listener or reader to writer, language communicates thinking in words and grammar. Consider the foregoing sentence in light of duplexities: speaker, listener; writer, reader; language, thinking; words, grammar. Any of these lexical dyads may be analyzed as a duplexity, dynamic and dialogical, where the relationships between the individual items of the pair reflect upon the other (and reflexively upon themselves). In addition to its agents involved, the nature of language itself also reveals an astonishing degree of duplexity. Every sentence can be syntactically bifurcated into subject and predicate: "Every sentence" is the subject, and "can be syntactically bifurcated into subject and predicate" is the predicate of the foregoing independent clause. Such a rendering is without nuance, but, as if noting that the body is made of either flesh or bone, the subject-predicate divide exemplifies a universal, if coarse, duplexity of language. Here is another example: Save the first letter of the first word in each independent clause of this sentence, all the others are rendered in lowercase rather than capitals. True, the difference between cases is not important (in this example) to the comprehension of meaning—which is why the work of poets such as E. E. Cummings and W. S. Merwin is readily understood—but it does highlight that there are indeed two systems of alphabetic expression in English, an upper-case and a lower-case set of letters, and the contrastive use between them is usually

meaningful, for capital letters not only aid the reader in identifying new sentences but also alert the eye to proper nouns. So, the foregoing is all by way of saying that duplexities of language are multitudinous. Indeed, between interlocutors, between the syntactic parts of a bifurcated sentence, and between even the conventions of orthography or printing, duplexities abound in language. In each of the instances of the foregoing, a dyad, through encounter, leads to dynamic expressions that allow a dialogue between them to emerge. This is self-evident in regards to human interlocutors, but the fighting forms of subject and predicate can also inform one another dialogically in a dynamic fashion with complex results, much in the same way that lexemes do as in, say, a phrasal verb (as in "turn on the light"), a collocation ("a friendly manner"), a compound noun ("hot dog"), or an idiom ("over the long haul"). Though possessing discrete individual meanings at the level of the word, when compounded, these expressions not only create new denotative meanings but their individual lexical parts, as duplexities, dynamically charge the resulting connotations. Of course, measuring these effects quantitatively is not possible, for, as Noam Chomsky's model of the universal grammar reminds us, language takes place in the mind (Chomsky 24). Louise M. Rosenblatt concurs, noting that the aesthetic experience of a literary work also takes place in the mind (Rosenblatt 48 – 49). What we can do, as Chomsky does, to reveal the shadow plays of poetry in the mind, is study instances of language as anatomical specimens. This is how the duplexities found in the upcoming poems by Matsuo Basho and Ezra Pound will be considered. So, what, exactly, is meant by the term *duplexity* here? In short, it refers to a pairing of features of language, such as phonology (sound), syntax (grammar), or even spelling (orthography). While difficult to succinctly define what duplexity in language is, making note of its properties may winnow the field of misapprehension. For every linguistic feature, pairing can occur—say, for example, between sounds or spellings or words. Interestingly, duplexities are not restricted to the fields that such features appear—so, a sound

may couple with an image, thereby forming a duplexity, à la *Fighting Forms*, which contrasts one sense with another, resulting in a curious effect akin to synesthesia.

As adult readers might savor the stately contrasts of a quatrain of iambic pentameter with an ABAB rhyme scheme, younger readers, too, naturally delight in what poetic duplexity brings to mind through oppositions of sense. At a reading given some years ago in Munich's Lyrik Kabinett for his translations of Edward Lear's limericks, the German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger (whose younger brother, Christian Enzensberger, incidently, wrote a dissertation at LMU Munich on the pedagogy and poetics of sonnets) spoke passionately about the role of poetic artifice in creating enjoyment for both children and adults (H. M. Enzensberger 3). The American poet Richard Wilbur, in addition to his Pulitzer-winning verse, consultancy to the Library of Congress, and famed translations of Molière, wrote two books of verse for children titled *Opposites*. Alongside their own duplexities with whimsical drawings for each poem, the books demonstrate that the muse of Heraclitus' fragments ("What was scattered / gathers. / What was gathered / blows apart.") and Shakespeare's sonnets ("Love's fire heats water; water cools not love.") abides (Heraclitus 27; Vendler 647). Indeed, oppositions in language have become a point of serious enquiry in the field of linguistics. In a study from 2014, *Oppositions in Discourse*, British linguist Leslie Jeffries makes the case that conventional oppositions in language use are not merely the concern of lexical semantics—scattered versus gathered, fire versus water—but that the very means by which opposition is constructed by speakers ought to be considered an important facet of critical discourse studies (Jeffries 1). That Jeffries draws much of her conclusions from analyses of English verse suggests that a poetics of duplexities is a psycholinguistic aspect to a theory of mind (10). That said, use of the term duplexity here is not meant to be synonymous with opposition; rather, the term refers to the observation that features of language pair in the mind of a reader of a poetic text. To be sure,

this is a more capacious notion of duplexity and one at variance from the mere side-by-side comparison and contrast of two linguistic forms; rather, insofar as we are concerned, the term references dyads of artifice perceived by a reader of poetry that result in complex and emergent forms of poetic experience.

That Jeffries draws on poetry to make claims about language in general brings us to the perennial question of what, exactly, distinguishes poetry from all other uses of language. Today, more than a century into the hegemony of free verse, as Timothy Steele convincingly argues in his magisterial study *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Meter*, the distinctions between poetry and nonpoetry are as cloudy as ever (Steele 81). That said, two twentieth-century poet-theorists have reckoned with this very issue, concluding that what distinguishes poetry from prose lies in the design of poetic artifice (Deutsch 111 – 113). To put it another way, consider Pound's famous dictum in the equation referred to throughout his *ABC of Reading*: "Dichten = condensare" (Pound, *ABC* 36). Poetry, here, amounts to a kind of thickening resulting from a condensation of language; in short, it is verse to prose. And while poetic artifice, as Veronica Forrest-Thomson defines the term (Forrest-Thomson 74), certainly exists in prose—meter, metaphor, and alliteration, in moderation, are perennial hallmarks of good style—in poetry, as Pound asserts, these effects are more pronounced and meaningful (Pound, *ABC* 36). Forrest-Thomson, in her dissertative critique of William Empson's explication of one of Shakespeare's sonnets, underscored the importance that poetic artifice plays in both a reader's experience as well as understanding of a poem (Empson 89 – 101; Forrest-Thomson 57 – 59). Empson, concludes Forrest-Thompson, engages in so-called "bad Naturalization," for his analyses of Shakespeare's ninety-fourth sonnet fail to take poetic artifice into account (Empson 100 – 101; Forrest-Thomson 58). In other words, Empson, though he paraphrases the discourse of the poem, does not address how poetic artifice in the sonnet conveys meaning on its own, and he complexifies the

meaning of the discourse he does address through a paraphase. What role do lexical choices, enjambment, or metrical patterns have on what Shakespeare writes, and what is experienced by the reader or listener of the poem? Such are the concerns of poetic artifice. As George Steiner notes in *The Poetry of Thought*, "where philosophy and literature mesh, where they are litigious toward one another in form or matter, these echoes of origin can be heard. The poetic genius of abstract thought is lit, made audible. Argument, even analytic, has its drumbeat" (Steiner 13).

Poetry's embodiment of thought, then, deserves anatomizing, and poetic artifice, those linguistic features heightened by literary convention and artistic experimentation, is what distinguishes poetry from other kinds of language. To be sure, investigations of poetics based on close readings of a poetic text, à la Forrest-Thomson, test artifice against the touchstone of theory. But, recalling Jeffries' exploration into the oppositions of language, given our psycholinguistic tendency to create appositions from language (either by perceiving their presence or being, otherwise, unwittingly affected by them), an understanding of how poetry is experienced in the mind would usher in new insights into the readerly experience of verse. In this regard, poet Frederick Turner and linguist Ernst Pöppel's thesis of their aforementioned essay, "The Neural Lyre," that the innate underpinnings of language structure, what Noam Chomsky called universal grammar, account for the course of poetry's similar development across languages and cultures vastly different from one another rings true (Chomsky 110 – 111; Turner and Pöppel 94, 100). Specifically, Turner and Pöppel note that the temporal length of lines of verse corresponds to the mind's capacity to hold a thought vis-à-vis auditory delivery: In other words, over millennia, poetry exploited a neurological happenstance that also determined its design (Turner and Pöppel 94, 102). Poetry, in this light, is akin to the plants described in *The Botany of Desire* by Michael Pollan, which argues that certain plants, including apples and tulips, have, in terms of natural

selection, succeeded beyond their ecological niche to become a global species, thanks to the luck of fulfilling a human desire (Pollan 15). So, too, with poetry, for the design of the poetic line hits upon a neurological universal in our species' powers of memory with regards to auditory input. Auditory input, of course, precedes literacy by millennia, which accounts for why Homer's *Odyssey* and the *Kumulipo*, the ancient Hawaiian cosmogonic chant (Lili'uokalani, intro.), have temporally similar line lengths. Literary scholar Brian Boyd in *Why Lyrics Last: Evolution, Cognition, and Shakespeare's Sonnets* concludes that the innate desire to play with patterns and fashion them in synesthetic forms of complexity is not only a hallmark of verse but likely the very reason why Shakespeare's sonnets, after some four centuries, remain the apex of lyrical art (Boyd 35).

To illustrate how poetic artifice is read in light of duplexity, consider Cid Corman's translation of Matsuo Basho's best-known haiku: "old pond / frog leaping / splash" (Corman). Without commenting on the success of the English against the Japanese original—an interlingual task that would certainly draw its own kind of duplexities—and taking stock of the English, such as it is, duplexities emerge from its five words. The first line, "old pond," sans article, momentarily creates an ambiguity to the reader, who wonders, briefly, pausing in doubt at the enjambment, whether this is an apostrophe, a direct address to the old pond, for the "old," as in "old friend," connotes familiarity. The adjective and countable noun nexus, sans article, lays bare an orthography that evokes the thing itself reflexively—the "o" of "old" and "pond" mimics the quintessential shape of a pond while the ending consonant in both words, the dental [d], suggests a bittersweet ending—not one as final, perhaps, had the ending been the harder [t], certainly, but the imagery of ruin and neglect emanate from even so small a change in the arc of the flicking tongue as this. "[O]ld" echoes *mold* in this context, and "pond" furthers a melancholic tack with the suggestion of *ponder*, as one would ponder an intractable problem of existential weight or, like Wordsworth, ponder, while

wandering as lonely as a cloud, a field of daffodils. In the second line, the first word, "frog," again without an article, seems, at first blush, to be connected through its orthographic "o" to the "old pond," but here, in contrast to the first line's word order of adjective and countable noun (singular, though without an article), "frog leaping" is both visually precise and syntactically ambiguous. One wonders whether a copular verb missing to complete this sentence grammatically in the present continuous tense (e.g. "[the] frog [is] leaping"). Or, one wonders that perhaps this is a syntactic throwback, like Spenser's creative spellings echoing Chaucer, with the present participle being used to echo Milton's postpositive adjectives, which were echoes themselves meant to hearken back to Virgil (e.g. "darkness visible"). The plosive of [p] in "leaping" brings us to the third line of the "splash," where the sibilants onomatopoeically capture the transliterated meaning of the final line of Basho's Japanese (e.g. *mizu no oto* or "sound of water"). "[S]plash," is where these fighting forms—the old pond and the leaping frog—break their symmetry as a duplexity to emerge as a form of both pond and frog but also of neither, as something newly wrought.

Here's another short poem, written by Ezra Pound, whose form as a couplet invites a reading of duplexity: "In a Station of the Metro / The apparition of these faces in the crowd: / Petals on a wet, black bough (Pound, *Personæ* 111)." The poem is a single sentence that, in grammatical design, is uncannily similar to Basho's haiku. Reading the title as a first line, the poetic stage, like the old pond, is set; and the second line, like the frog leaping, brings on the actors, who, like Basho's frog, lie in waiting. Pound's deft use of the colon evokes the notion in Japanese poetics of the *kireji*, or so-called "cutting word," which acts in the manner of a volta in a sonnet, bifurcating the stream of thought, allowing a new tack to be taken (*Princeton* 751 –752). The colon furthers a metaphorical duplexity to be drawn between the literal commuters and the figurative flowers on the rained-on branch. The duplexity between the words "crowd" and "bough" connect the tenor and vehicle of the metaphor through an

assonantal near-rhyme. In his *Philosophy of Rhetoric*, I. A. Richards states that, for a metaphor to be effective, it must balance both the ground, or commonalities, between tenor and vehicle, as well as the tension between the two (Richards 93 – 95). In looking at the comparison between the faces and petals of the poem, duplexities emerge along various aspects of language. To start with the presentation of the words themselves, the "faces" and "petals" orthographically share, as a chiasmus, a pair of vowels isolated between consonants. The prosody of the two words also forms a duplexity, for both are trochees. Furthermore, the words immediately following each term reveal a syntactic duplexity, as both prepositional phrases (i.e. "in the crowd" and "on a wet, black bough") qualify the duplexity formed by the plural nouns with information as to their locations. Phonologically, in the final line of the poem, yet another duplexity is found in an imagistic bond (à la fighting forms), strengthened through alliteration and punctuation, between the petals and bough. The [t] of "Petals" and "wet" echo, as does the [b] of "black" and "bough". Moreover, the [p] of "Petals" and the [b] of "black" and "bough" are both plosives, consonants that share a manner of articulation, which bridges both sides of the comma. What does a reading, such as this, of a poem's duplexities reveal? In addition to how they color the poem as a whole, the elements of each dyad that has been read in light of duplexity reveals its own ground and tension, which, in a manner akin to I. A. Richards' characterization of metaphor as vehicle and tenor in tandem, toggle as though quantum particles on the verge of breaking symmetry.

When symmetry breaks in poetic duplexity, dynamics ensue. These dynamics are a cyclone of linguistic energy emanating from an interiority of asymmetries in motion that sound and resound, thickening into a condensed charge that, upon reading further into the poem, new symmetries will subsequently break to add further echoes without end. Acknowledging the limitations of studying the linguistic workings of the mind (as, under different guises, both Chomsky and Iser agree), readings of a poem's dynamic duplexities of

artifice must be conducted qualitatively (Chomsky 180; Iser 9). What follows here, then, is a description of my own reading process of Basho's and Pound's poetics to illustrate how duplexity's dynamics, at least in one instance, can be read to heighten the experience and understanding of a poem. To return to Basho's haiku, we will now look into how reading the dynamics of the poem's artifice—that is, the breaking symmetries of a poem's duplexity and the new poetic forms thereby created—enriches and informs the experience of the poem: "old pond / frog leaping / splash" (Corman). Though not actually of the text itself, the slashes marking the tripartite structure of the haiku catch my readerly eye. My eye notices the letter "o" of the first line and rushes past the enjambed mark to the "o" in "frog". In a like way, my eye notes how the "p" of "leaping" and "splash" run past the slash. I smile at a rhyme that neither Basho nor Corman intended—"splash" and "slash"—one that is created by my having rendered the haiku as a single line to save space on the page. The smile abides as the misconstrued "leaping / splash," proffered by the alliterative [p], causes me to wonder at the agency of water and its kinesthetic grace. Indeed, the word order alone, I see, led me to read two noun phrases rather than an independent clause. In reading the dynamics of the duplexities in this way—as two noun phrases, whereby my mind's eye saw an old-pond frog and a leaping splash—an instance of reading is created that runs counter to and forms a duplexity with the translator's intended independent clause (i.e. "[At the] old pond, [a] frog [is] leaping [and makes a] splash."). The poetic truncations of syntax make me slow down to read again, where I count the words, five, and syllables, six. This duplexity between the word and syllable counts places a premium on the outlier, "leaping," which, indeed, as a trochee, seems to leap over its monosyllabic brethren, highlighting the divide between noun and verb, object and action. I say the word aloud—"leaping"—following how my lips open and tongue touches my front teeth, feeling how my tongue forms the vowel by curling high in the mouth, noticing how my lips pop in aspiration and sensing the ringing through my nose of the subtle,

second syllable: I feel as much as see the dynamics of the duplexities of the first syllable that lift the frog aloft and the second syllable that heralds the arc of its dive.

As in the design of a haiku, this dissertive essay is divided into three parts. Amounting to its own trivium, this reading of poetry as ecstasy begins with the idea of duplexity, which Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms* illustrated at the outset. The first part of this essay describes how duplexity is read in a poetic text. Akin to duplexities found in the scientific fields of biology and physics, duplexities in the everyday usage of the English language—such as phrasal verbs or compound nouns—are also capable, upon breaking symmetry, in dynamically creating new forms (i.e. "hot" and "dog" versus "hot dog"). As a wholesale product of language, poetry abounds in duplexities, and their presence is even more abundant in poetic artifice, where the linguistic effects, such as alliteration and rhyme, are, as Pound says, thickened or condensed. The second part of this dissertation describes how dynamics of duplexities are read in a poetic text. Duplexities of poetic artifice, as single constructs of two forms, possess the potential to dynamically unleash new forms as a poem is read. The qualification of the word "potential" is important here, for, as Wolfgang Iser asserts, it is the mind of the reader that responds aesthetically to the literary text (Iser 163). Of course, this does not demean the all-important function of the poetic text, which has the vital role of launching or, to appropriate Basho's frog, leaping lexically-borne prompts to the reader's mental engagement. Collocations, for example, or, even better, idioms possess duplexities that, by semantic practice, amount to surprisingly unambiguous meanings. But, as readers bring their own lexicon, experience, and percipience, every reading of a poem is singular, even re-readings of a poetic text, for the reader who returns to the poem is arguably more informed with regards to lexicon, experience, and percipience. After such dynamics, as the readings of Basho's haiku and Pound's couplet exemplify, which begin after the duplexities of a poem's reading break symmetry, we will turn to a philosophy of dialogue to

model how forms of poetry emerge and ultimately work to create an ecstatic experience for the reader. This brings us, then, to the third part of this dissertation, which describes the role of dialogue, as Martin Buber uses the term, in the creation of these emergent forms of poetic artifice leading to ecstasy. In the seminal text espousing his philosophy of dialogue, *I and Thou*, Buber famously declares that all "actual life is encounter" (Buber, Kaufmann 62). And such meetings, such encounters that form so-called I-Thou relationships, can be formed between seemingly asymmetrical pairs—between a person and another person, of course, but also between a person and an animal, a plant, or even a work of art. For example, strange as it seems, Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms* might well be treated as co-author of these words, for it was sitting in the presence of this work that the idea for this theory of poetry, heard almost as a whisper between confidantes, came to mind. Dialogue, then, after duplexity and dynamics, is the esemplastic force at work that brings the recognition of duplexities and the delectations of dynamics together to bedazzle the reader of poetry with such an explosion of artifice as to cast the reader into a state that I have come to think of as a kind of poetic ecstasy, a merging of reader and writer. This is all by way of saying that the reader's I-Thou relationship with the text, if you will, is the most decisive factor in determining how the heights of a poem might be ascended, in the way that Brian Boyd speaks of Shakespeare's sonnets, to the summit of lyrical art (Boyd 35). Of course, such high-flown thoughts as these are prone to abstraction. To avoid needlessly falling into such pitfalls, the principles of this reading must be concrete. Toward that end, returning to Marc's *Fighting Forms*, the model of duplexity is clear: A single form possessing two lesser forms that, in their interaction, create emergent forms of complexity. And these duplexities and their dynamics, akin to those referred to in science and linguistics, are present in poetry. As they abide in poetry, their study is valuable. Indeed, to ignore poetic duplexities is to ignore poetic artifice, the very charge that Veronica Forrest-Thomson leveled at William Empson's analysis of a Shakespearean sonnet that did

not account for its poetics, which is to say that we ignore duplexity at our intellectual peril of misreading literature (Forrest-Thomson 58 – 59). Reading the poetics of ecstasy entails reckoning with the complexities of a text and their relationships with other such complexities. Detecting duplexity in poetic artifice, savoring its dynamic entanglements, and allowing these emergent forms born of these dynamic duplexities to usher in a dialogue with the poetic work at large is what allows for the experience of a poem's ecstasy. Given this, the subject of literacy, then, is of great concern to this proposition and will be addressed in "Literacies of Style," a chapter that soon follows. What comes next is an introduction to an integral form of poetry, the sonnet, and a particular sonnet—in fact, a sonnet on the sonnet—by the American poet E. A. Robinson, which will allow for a deeper dive into the poetics of duplexity and how a reading of fighting forms as such enriches a poem.

> The other day I went to call upon a friend of mine who earns her living as a publisher's reader. The room was a little dark, it seemed to me, when I went in. Yet, as the window was open and it was a fine spring day, the darkness must have been spiritual—the effect of some private sorrow I feared. Her first words as I came in confirmed my fears. 'Alas, poor boy!' she exclaimed, tossing the manuscript she was reading to the ground with a gesture of despair.
>
> Had some accident happened to one of her relations, I asked, motoring or climbing?
>
> 'If you call three hundred pages on the evolution of the Elizabethan sonnet an accident," she said.
>
> 'Is that all?' I replied with relief.
>
> 'All?' she retaliated. 'Isn't it enough?' (Woolf 278)

The witty frustration expressed in Virginia Woolf's in "Why?" is understandable, and her bromide on bad writing subsumed under the aegis of the sonnet is something of a classic. Indeed, the greatest Elizabethan sonneteer, William Shakespeare himself, mocks with relish the sonnettomania of 1590s London, where poetasters regurgitated bankrupt Petrarchan conceits: "My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun" (Vendler 555). That he does so in a sonnet—as E. A. Robinson did, too, three centuries later to mock the late Victorian flourishing of the form—ought to give us pause. Aside from the posturing here, how did Woolf really regard Shakespeare's 130th sonnet? How do our own postmodernist sensibilities, with the echo of Theodor W. Adorno's dictum about poetry after Auschwitz, account for Paul Celan's translations of Shakespeare's sonnets into German that appeared in the mid-1960s? How, too, to account for Albrecht Haushofer's *Moabit Sonnets*, which were written in a

concentration camp and found on his person by his brother after his murder in 1945? How to account for *Apokalypse* by Reinhold Schneider, whose work inspired Munich's White Rose activists or *Venezianisches Credo* by Rudolph Hagelstange, sonnet sequences, both, inspired by the need to reckon with the atrocities of the Second World War? During that conflict, the U.S. armed forces published and distributed to the troops the sonnets of Edna St. Vincent Millay. As a result of their deployments during World War II, the American poets Randall Jarrell and Richard Wilbur found inspiration in the sonnets of Rainer Maria Rilke and those by the artist Edgar Degas, respectively. What is it about the sonnet's poetics that would allow, despite cycles of boom and bust as literary currency, poets of such different stripe to find such solace and inspiration as both writers and readers? In considering this, we ought to remember that Rilke himself turned to translating the sonnets of Michelangelo in 1915, and that the famed British poets of the First World War—including Rupert Brooke, Wilfred Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon—turned to the sonnet, as Wordsworth did, for brief solace amid the form's notoriously scanty ground.

This is all by way of saying that we, as critics, ought to exercise due caution.

> Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
>
> Mindless of its just honours; with this key
>
> Shakespeare unlocked his heart; the melody
>
> Of this small lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
>
> A thousand times this pipe did Tasso sound;
>
> With it Camöens soothed an exile's grief;
>
> The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle leaf
>
> Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned

His visionary brow: a glow-worm lamp,

It cheered mild Spenser, called from Faery-land

To struggle through dark ways; and, when a damp

Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand

The Thing became a trumpet; whence he blew

Soul-animating strains—alas, too few! (Wordsworth, *Works* 206 –207)

In reading how Wordsworth ahistorically rattles off the impressive roster of the form's practitioners—Shakespeare, Tasso, Camoens, Dante, Spenser, and Milton—we wonder at Woolf's jest. In light of the aforementioned history of the sonnet in conflict during the twentieth century, we must conclude that, if not of the compendious heft of the tome that was, in frustration of its topic, later cast against a wall in Woolf's essay, a study of the sonnet's poetics needn't be an exercise of complete folly. Michael Spiller, a scholar specializing in the history of the English sonnet and the strategies of its sequences, notes that the Italian origins of the form originated in the thirteenth-century court of Holy Roman Emperor Frederick II in Palermo, Sicily (Spiller 14 – 15). Credited as the inventor of the sonnet, Giacomo da Lentini, a notary, was a poet himself. Spiller suggests that the profession of notary, with an education in rhetoric and a background in the argumentation of jurisprudence, informed the two-fold structure of fourteen lines that continues to this day, an asymmetrical rendering of an octave and a sestet, a statement of eight lines and a counter-statement of six. More precisely, the octave was comprised of two quatrains and the sestet of two tercets. The woven pattern of clinging rhymes might have inspired its name, *sonetto*, meaning "little sound," derived from the Latin *sonus* (*Princeton* 1318). The form gained popularity at court, spreading to the Italian mainland, where it eventually found its way to the

likes of Dante and Petrarch. That the sonnet was written in the mother tongue of its poets (rather than Latin, which still held cachet among the literati) aided its fluent facility as verse. In this regard, the volta, the break between the octave and the sestet, in addition to the duplexities of rhyme that punctuate the argumentation of thesis and antithesis, creates the most important duplexity in the form, one whose effects have been profound not only to the history of poetry but, as we shall soon see, quite possibly to the cultural development of expressions of self-consciousness as well.

Deflating the animus of Woolf or inflating the defense of Wordsworth is one thing, but asserting that a form of received verse, one whose camp has been the butt of jokes for centuries, can substantively address a concept as weighty as, say, theory of mind is another. Even so, I wager that, following an autobiographical interlude and a deeper dive into the duplexities at work in the sonnet, such a claim may not sound as preposterous as it does now. Arguing that a philosophy of dialogue is the driving force in reading the duplexities of poetic artifice as ecstasy, sharing my own origin story, vis-à-vis E. A. Robinson's metasonnet, will serve the reader's need to contextualize the literary experiences formative to this theoretical model. Though I surely read sonnets prior to college, it was during an undergraduate survey course of English literature at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa that the form first captivated me with its rhetorical dance of musical charms. Professor Stephen Canham, saying a few words before reading Elizabeth Barrett-Browning's best-known sonnet, spoke of how the poem has become so layered in saccharine kitsch that its power is nearly lost to us. For him, he added, he imagined the question that kick-starts the over-the-top answer—"How do I love thee?"—not as a meditative monologue but as a restatement of what the speaker has, incredulously, just heard from her beloved (P. Levin 119). Listening to what Professor Canham read that day made me feel that I, not Robert Browning, was the careless lover whose insolence fueled that justly exquisite retort in fourteen lines of rhymed iambic

pentameter. Years later, studying applied linguistics (with the aim of teaching English as a second language) at Hawai‘i Pacific University, I worked as a security guard evenings and weekends at the Honolulu Academy of Arts theater. Minding the post at the entrance during concerts and film screenings afforded, for hours at a time, the luxury of being paid to read. *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* by Helen Vendler, which was then newly-published, occupied me for months. I could easily spend an entire shift on just one of her two- or three-page readings of a sonnet, which, to my delight, drew upon linguistics and literary history, marrying my dual interests, a rarity among books on poetics that I had read up until then.

A few years passed. I graduated, moved to Manhattan, and taught English, joining the untenured class of M.A.'s who called themselves "subway flyers" and shuttled between college campuses all over the city. Though the hours were rough, as a poet's education, the work was vital to my learning, through the challenges of my students, how the systems and networks of the English language function—how, in other words, orthography affects phonology or how syntax affects morphology. Eventually, I was excited to land a job teaching composition in the English Department of the City College of New York, a stone's throw from my home on West 137th Street. Having a ten-minute walk as a commute was wonderful, but I was also excited because I knew the poet Marilyn Hacker taught there. I finagled my way into the MFA program in creative writing and registered for her prosody seminar. One of the exercises that I recall best was selecting a poem—in my case, "Venice" by George Szirtes, a sonnet—and replicating its meter and parts of speech but otherwise creating an entirely new poem. Another moment that left an impression was an aside that Hacker made, frustrated at something left unsaid in class, to which she chided, "I bet no one here can recite a sonnet of Shakespeare's from memory." I knew several by heart but was too intimidated to say anything, for, having long admired her work, especially the sonnet sequence of her doomed affair—*Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons*—I was star-

struck (Hacker 6). The duplexity of the lyrical I and the famous poet formed a formidable concoction. Our text was an anthology of essays on poetic forms edited by Annie Finch, and Hacker had contributed the piece on the sonnet, which captivated me as Vendler's work on Shakespeare had (Finch and Varnes 297 – 307). My time at City College led me to the work of another faculty member of the English Department, Paul Oppenheimer. Without knowing who he was, I'd met Oppenheimer earlier in the term at a teachers' meeting, where his eloquence astonished me; off the cuff, he spoke in artful paragraphs without pause. My intrigue piqued, I read his faculty biography and went to the library to find his best-known work, *The Birth of the Modern Mind: Self, Consciousness, and the Invention of the Sonnet*.

Oppenheimer, like Wordsworth, finds the happenstance that most poets of note having written in the sonnet form to be telling (Oppenheimer 3). Surely, then, he argues, there must be an attribute in the design of the sonnet that has helped elicit such great poetry. (That said, as Woolf and Shakespeare have attested, the formal design of a poem is no guarantee to its success as a work of art.) Perhaps the deft use of poetic artifice allied with the sonnet's telltale structure accounts for the form's perennial attraction. Oppenheimer offers that, to which the literary scholar S. K. Heninger concurs, the occurrence of the numerical pattern 6:8:12—two tercets, two quatrains, and a foreshortened sonnet—complements Pythagorean Platonic number theory, "reflecting what Georgi in his *Harmonia mundi* calls the 'fabric of the soul,' according to which 'the whole world was arranged and perfected'" (Oppenheimer 6). These are the same numbers that inspire the aesthetics of Palladian architecture (Heninger 76 – 80). Oppenheimer's book on the invention of the sonnet is comprised of two long essays and an anthology of sonnets (from Spanish, French, Italian, and German, all translated by Oppenheimer himself). An important observation that Oppenheimer makes here is that the sonnet's power to dialogically engage self and consciousness comes from its superabundance of poetic artifice, whose tonnage is much more than can be taken in a single reading or

recitation (Oppenheimer 3, 9). In other words, he argues that the mindful attention of reading sonnets in private fostered a form of literacy that enabled new kinds of writing. Oppenheimer's enthusiasm at this insight is intimated by the style of its articulation: Reading sonnets

> in privacy and silence, however, readers may grant themselves total control, stopping and starting at will, concentrating on a particular phrase, repeating their readings of hard passages, reading sections and words at random, rearranging a text in their minds, allowing associations with past experiences and other texts to suggest themselves, and more of these than could possibly be managed during a public reading or performance (Oppenheimer 39).

Indeed, poetry that can be as easily digested as prose, which fits the characterization of the free verse that has been *en vogue* for more than a century, is of a different fiber than that of good sonnets. Brian Boyd argues that the poetic artfulness of Shakespeare's sonnets allows them to abide in the mind in a way that poetry of less artifice does not (Boyd 34). Toward that end, then, the metasonnet of E. A. Robinson will now be looked at in terms of its poetics of duplexity. I first encountered the poem sometime in early 2003, and its power to move me, through its artifice and design, remains undiminished two decades later.

Born in 1869, E. A. Robinson spent the first half of his life in Maine and the second in New York City, where he died in 1935. Though he won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry three times and was nominated for the Nobel Prize in Literature four times, Robinson is little read today, and, save for a handful of labor-of-love editions of his selected poetry, such as the one that Donald Hall edited for the Ecco Press in 1994, he is completely out of print (Hall, *Robinson* 14). Of course, such is the nature of changing tastes, one might argue, but Robinson inspired generations of great poets, including many former Poets Laureate of the United

States. In the introduction to his little edition of Robinson's poems, Donald Hall reminds us of Robinson's presence during the heyday of literary modernism:

> It is seldom observed that E. A. R. also published in *Poetry*—with Eliot's "Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," with Pound and Stevens and Moore. In one issue—March 1914—Harriet Monroe published Carl Sandburg's most famous poem, "Chicago" ("Hog butcher to the world," etc.), and the poem "Eros Turranos," which is arguably Robinson's best (8).

"Eros Turranos," a ballad, not least for the achievement of its artifice, is an extraordinary poem. Robert Pinsky, a former U.S. Poet Laureate, is fond of reading the poem at public gatherings, whose metapoetics he often celebrates as "a hyper ballad, a ballad to the ballad power" (Pinsky, *Democracy* 83). In *Democracy, Culture and the Voice of Poetry*, Pinsky concludes his essay as Hall did, by noting the differences between Sandburg and Robinson in the two poems that appeared in the March 1914 issue of *Poetry*. While "Chicago" amounts to a barbaric yawp à la Whitman that once "may have seemed not only original but *avant-garde*," Robinson's poem "is arresting and spectacular, in the chamber of spirit and ear [...] [that] is the place of poetry" (92 – 93). Like Hall and Pinsky, W. S. Merwin is another former U. S. Poet Laureate whose reading of Robinson (while at Princeton) served to inspire. Scott Donaldson, whose thorough biography of Robinson was published by Columbia University Press in 2007, begins the book with an anecdote worth sharing. Far from his home on Maui, Merwin gave a reading in Paris with another poet at the Village Voice bookshop in Saint Germain des Pres in 2003, the same year I discovered Robinson. Afterwards, during the signing, someone asked whether E. A. Robinson had truly influenced his work. Merwin then began to recite Robinson's "Reuben Bright," a sonnet, extemporaneously. When he faltered in the sestet, amazingly, a fellow poet, also from memory, prompted the forgotten line, with

which Merwin was able to finish the poem and, thereby, quip: “Does that answer your question?” (Donaldson 2 – 3)

E. A. Robinson wrote sonnets throughout his career, which he collected as *Sonnets, 1889 – 1927*. The book was published in 1928 by two firms simultaneously: Crosby Gaige published a special edition (with a run of five hundred copies) that was signed by Robinson, and Macmillan, Robinson’s longtime publisher, offered the trade version of the book for the mass market (Gale 204). Robinson curated the collection, omitting some poems and lightly changing some of those he kept, ultimately publishing eighty-nine sonnets, most of which were written early in his career (204). (Later in life, Robinson dedicated himself to novel-like poems in blank verse.) Robinson’s sonnets never seem to waiver in quality; neither early poems nor later ones betray a variance in their riches of voice and style. In *Sound and Form in Modern Poetry*, Harvey Gross and Robert McDowell are emphatic in their assessment of Robinson’s modern approach to the form’s metrical tradition as singular. In a passage discussing how Robinson is a poet of the phrase rather than a poet of the image, Gross and McDowell see that this musical bent enabled his art to carry poems of middle length, such as “Isaac and Archibald,” as well as book-length poems, such as his Arthurian narratives, at which point they append and italicize this note about Robinson’s sonnetry: “The poet was also successful in scaling down to shorter forms, becoming *the* American master of the sonnet” (Gross and McDowell 59). In his reading of “Firelight,” a sonnet of irony and pathos by Robinson about an old married couple, Stephen Burt, who co-edited, with David Mikics, *The Art of the Sonnet*, writes that Robinson

> gets his aesthetic effects from his verbal restraint, from the symmetries and ironies with which his words reflect his story. [...] Instead of colorful diction,

> instead of allusion, Robinson offers symmetries. The sonnet began with a string of present active indicatives ("they seek," "their joy recalls," "there falls"), and it ends in counterfactuals, clause after clause. One shocker, "Apart"—a literally breath-taking caesura, at an unusual place in the line—emphasizes another sort of balance: the sonnet began with "together," and ends with "apart" (Burt and Mikics 248).

Gross, McDowell, Burt, and Mikics, in their conclusions about Robinson's art of the sonnet, hint that this is due to the poet's attention to a phraseology that is at once existentially modern yet cognizant of the long metrical tradition of the form alongside a sensitivity to symmetries of lexicon and syntax (Gross and McDowell 60 – 61; Burt and Mikics 247). Observations such as these, with which Hall and Pinsky agree, have been made by other poets as well (Hall, *Robinson* 14; Pinsky 92 – 93).

Stephen Burt writes that Robinson was "by far the closest American precursor—in chronology, in style, and in temperament—to the darkest, most modern aspects of Robert Frost" (Burt and Mikics 247). Like Robinson, Frost "used inherited forms and meters for homely American subjects" that were sometimes rendered as "grim, finely turned sonnets" as his sonnet "Design" exemplifies (246). (I recall another professor of mine at the University of Hawai‘i calling Frost's "Design" the most frightening poem in all of American literature.) As one gathers from Donald Hall's memoir *Their Ancient Glittering Eyes: Remembering Poets and More Poets*, Robert Frost (1874 – 1963) was not one to graciously give credit where credit was due—but no Bloomian anxiety of influence need be plumbed here, for Frost's style and theme, as Burt cites, are self-evidently Robinsonian. Edna St. Vincent Millay (1892 – 1950), a poet a generation younger than Robinson, also hailed from Maine and, after graduating from Vassar College in 1917, moved to New York City. Thomas Hardy

purportedly said that, for him, America held only two attractions, the skyscraper and the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay. In reading through her *Collected Sonnets*, one is wont to agree with Hardy. Millay's approach to (bisexual) love and (progressive) politics might have been seen as radical, but her sonnets, which detail her views on both love and politics, are as traditional as those of Robinson. Marilyn Hacker (1942 –), who, like Millay, wrote of her sexual escapades in New York in her aforementioned sequence places an even greater premium on lyrically expressing her persona as a lesbian and feminist through verse (Hacker 6). Marilyn Nelson (1946 –), an African-American poet in Connecticut, found inspiration in *Sommerfugledalen*, or *Butterfly Valley*, a crown of sonnets by the Danish poet Inger Christensen, which led Nelson to pen her own crown, *A Wreath for Emmett Till*, which was published as an illustrated children's book that detailed the vile lynching of a child.

In addition to the poetics of a modern American idiom, these four poets—Frost, Millay, Hacker, and Nelson—have incorporated the politics of E. A. Robinson's sonnets of caring about the downtrodden and forgotten (like Reuben Bright), the disenfranchised of society, and writing of the demi-monde with an appreciation akin to love. (Emma Lazarus' sonnet emblazoned on the Statue of Liberty, "The New Colossus," also boldly exhorts its politics of caring.) Robert Frost used his verse to draw attention to the plight of farming communities and highlight the homespun values of the rural poor. Edna St. Vincent Millay, in writing of her own life, extended sympathies to the bohemian set, which placed a premium on sexual freedom and political progressiveness decades ahead of her time. Marilyn Hacker echoes Millay in her technical finesse with metrics, choice of subject matter, and political concerns, but, whereas Millay's sonnets seem constructed to evoke an eternal relevance, Hacker injects references to pop art, contemporary slang, and cultural references to give a time-stamp to her verse in a way that John Updike's novels do, so that they bear witness to the vagaries and injustices of history. Marilyn Nelson—sometimes through the lens of

autobiography—has devoted her career to celebrating African-American themes. A well-known example of this is her biography in verse for younger readers, *Carver: A Life in Poems*. In his sonnets, Robinson, who spent much of his adult life in abject poverty, wrote of the poor and working class with first-hand knowledge of their struggles. In his hands, the sonnet, a form of verse still redolent of its cachet of courtly love, became a deft political instrument, whose soul-animating strains echo Wordsworth, Milton, and Lazarus.

While poets such as Frost and Millay certainly wrote sonnets that suggest an influence of Robinson, other poets, notably T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, pointedly denied an influence by the elder poet, who, as the careers of the younger poets were in ascendance, was finally receiving the sort of prizes and press that would incite envy. A young Donald Hall, as the poetry editor of *Paris Review*, interviewed both Eliot and Pound and, as an enthusiastic reader of Robinson's poetry, managed to ask both poets pointedly about a possible influence. Hall—in mentioning to Eliot that poets of Hall's own generation looked to Eliot and Pound as models—inquired about the big names in English-language poetry during Eliot's youth.

> INTERVIEWER: Were you aware of people like Hardy or Robinson at all?
>
> ELIOT: I was slightly aware of Robinson because I read an article about him in *The Atlantic Monthly* which quoted some of his poems, and that wasn't my cup of tea at all (Hall, *Ancient* 262).

Hall later tried his luck with Pound in the same offhanded way.

> INTERVIEWER: It is amazing that you could come to Europe and quickly associate yourself with the best living writers. Had you been aware of any of the poets writing in America before you left? Was Robinson anything to you?

> POUND: Aiken tried to sell me Robinson and I didn't fall. This was London too. I then dragged it out of him that there was a guy at Harvard doing funny stuff. Mr. Eliot turned up that year or so later (324).

Though Pound writes, in *ABC of Reading*, that the sonnet is the devil, this is surely a jest or otherwise an overstatement fueled by the preponderance of poetasters' quatorzains (Pound, *ABC* 157). In fact, Pound wrote and translated many sonnets, admiring those penned in the Renaissance by poets in Provence, Italy, and England. Eliot cloaked his admiration of the sonnet by embedding the form in *The Waste Land*. Besides which, his great love for quatrains, a telltale component of the sonnet, as in those exquisitely crafted ones of "Whispers of Immortality," make Eliot's answer to Hall about having come across Robinson in a magazine sound disingenuous, especially given, as Hall notes, Robinson's work was published by Harriet Monroe in issues of *Poetry* alongside that of Eliot. Moreover, Robinson, Eliot, and Hall all went to Harvard and published poetry in the student-run literary magazine, *The Harvard Advocate*, which, in Donald Hall's turn there at the editorial helm, occasionally reprinted poems by its famous alumni to raise funds. So, Robinson and Eliot appeared in that publication together, and, moreover, it is known that Eliot read the anthology because he complained to the editor—that is, Hall—that there were copyediting errors in the published version (Hall, *Ancient* 80 – 81). In short, whether due to genuine differences as to the direction of modern poetry or to some kind of Bloomian anxiety of influence, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound had it out for Robinson, and their efforts—despite the occasional note of admiration by the likes of Hall, Pinsky, or Merwin—were successful. Some three decades after those interviews and following the deaths of Eliot and Pound, Hall felt compelled to close his introduction to Robinson's selected poetry with this:

> When he was young, Robinson sounded like no one else—and paid the price; but to the unhistoric ear of a later era, Robinson's poetry, when set beside "The Waste Land," sounded Victorian. If the combative Eliot needed to dismiss Robinson as "negligible," it is understandable. But surely we need no longer dismiss the author of "Eros Turranos" and "Isaac and Archibald" because he wrote iambics in a coherent syntax (Hall, *Robinson* 14).

Discovering that access to Robinson's poetry had plausibly been denied to the reading public out of envy under the guise of integrity by Eliot and Pound left me genuinely perplexed, for, elsewhere, both Eliot and Pound celebrated traditional forms of verse, such as the sonnet, and the poets of such verse, like Dante, Shakespeare, and Milton. Assuming that Hall is right, that Robinson was a selected as a cypher to represent the worst vices of Victorian verse, would Eliot and Pound really throw under the bus a genuinely gifted poet, who, in his own way, modernized American poetry and paved the way for their own approach to the art? It seemed doubtful, for Eliot spent his career promulgating Donne as Pound did Calvacanti—two poets whose unsung works of poetry, including their brilliant sonnets, were underrated and in need of bolstering. Intrigued, I wrote to Donald Hall to ask his thoughts on the matter now, and, to my delight, he wrote back, which began a years-long correspondence that averaged about a letter every two weeks, where we dished about everyday life, literary art, and, often, the poetry of E. A. Robinson. Hall read Robinson throughout his life; he even wrote a sonnet about a key moment in Robinson's career, his unlikely discovery by President Theodore Roosevelt (Donaldson 226 – 234; Hall, *Apples* 14). Introduced to Robinson's poetry by his son, Kermit, President Roosevelt went out of his way, while in the White House, to write a review of Robinson's book, *The Torrent and the Night Before*, which included the metasonnet at the heart of this dissertation's thesis, and to offer the poet a

sinecure at the customs house in New York (Donaldson 230 – 232). Hall wrote that he, too, was perplexed by Eliot's and Pound's apparent distaste for Robinson but assumed, as he had in his essay, that it was a more politically-expedient position to take in light of their particular approach to modernizing American poetry. I wrote to Robert Hass and Robert Pinsky as well with the same question—both wished me well with this project but felt they couldn't offer an answer. I also spoke to Lawrence Ferlinghetti briefly and W. S. Merwin at some length by telephone and asked the same question of them. Ezra Pound's daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz—an American poet and translator herself who still lives in the thirteenth-century South Tyrolean castle where her father once lived—put me in touch with Ferlinghetti. When I asked Ferlinghetti about his thoughts of Hall's sense of things in this regard, he, like Hass and Pinsky, demurred but added that, though his own poetics also differ from Robinson, he still read Robinson, adding, too, that he had written critically of Robinson's verse in a dissertation at the Sorbonne that addressed the relationship between cities and poets.

My telephone conversation with Merwin was happenstantial. I had written to the poet's address in Maui some weeks before my own return home to Oʻahu, hoping, should he answer in time, that an in-person interview might work out. No reply came. Knowing that Merwin had read Robinson while in college at a time, interestingly, when he also visited Ezra Pound at St. Elisabeths, the psychiatric hospital where the elder poet was incarcerated, which, to me, demonstrated how open-minded some poets, like Ferlinghetti, could be toward other approaches to the art. As my time in the islands was winding down, I was so keen to meet with Merwin that I made a gambit. From an antiquarian bookseller, I had recently purchased one of the five hundred signed copies of Robinson's sonnets published by Crosby Gaige in 1928. I enclosed a hasty note with the book, adding my Hawaiʻi cell phone number for good measure, and mailed the thing off via express mail. Alas, no reply came. As it happens, fate brought me a few days later to Maui to visit my brother at his home in Makawao, just six

miles from Merwin's address in Haiku. In the final hours of that weekend-long visit, while watching the grandeur of the sunset from Big Beach before heading to the airport for the flight home to Honolulu, my cell phone rang. It was Paula, Merwin's wife, who gently chastised that my terrible handwriting was the reason why they hadn't reached out sooner, for they had done their best but were told at each instance that it was the wrong number. I laughed. She called out to Merwin, "Bill, Mark's on the phone." His resonant voice said hello and thanked me for the book, which, due to his eyesight, he could no longer read, but Paula could read to him. We spoke of Robinson and poetry. As things were wrapping up, I asked if I might venture a final question. "Of course," he said. "Given," I began, working off of a mental script, "that you, Donald Hall, Richard Wilbur, Conrad Aiken, Louise Bogan, Louis Untermeyer, Robert Pinsky, and other former Poets Laureate of the United States read Robinson profitably and were inspired by his work, how can one account for the fact that his work is, then, now virtually unread and wholly out of print?" Merwin chuckled, and, after a pause, he said, "For the life of me, Mark, I cannot fathom why anyone would bother to spend a life reading, let alone writing, poetry." I laughed at that, unsure whether Merwin was sagaciously pulling my leg, and said goodbye.

Indeed, Merwin's delivery was so perfectly dry that, to this day, I sometimes think he was channeling Troilus' cosmic laugh at the end of Chaucer's great poem, able, so late in life, to see the great comedy of it all as, ultimately, inconsequential. Other times—thinking of the garden on his property (of land reclaimed from razing by the devastating practices of mid-twentieth-century monoculture) that he worked, for decades, nurturing a small rainforest of critically-endangered palm trees indigenous to Hawai‘i that is now the centerpiece of the Merwin Conservancy, a non-profit organization dedicated to furthering the poet's ecopoetics and environmental activism—I think that I simply fell for the joke (and failed the litmus test), much in the way that the young Donald Hall, after meeting T. S. Eliot for the first time in his

London office at Faber and Faber, missed Old Possum's wit completely when the elder poet, shaking Hall's hand goodbye.

> "Let me see," said T. S. Eliot, "forty years ago I went from Harvard to Oxford. Now you are going from Harvard to Oxford. What advice may I give you?" He paused delicately, shrewdly, while I waited with greed for the words that I would repeat for the rest of my life, the advice from elder to younger setting me on the road of emulation. When he had ticked off the comedian's exact milliseconds of pause, he said, "Have you any long underwear?" (Hall, *Ancient* 87 – 88)

Whether in jest or not, Merwin continued to write, even blind, even with a broken arm, and even after Paula died. Three years after a two-volume edition of his collected poetry, edited by J. D. McClatchy, was published by the Library of America in 2013, Merwin published a final book, *Garden Time*, which includes a sonnet titled, "One Sonnet of Summer" (Merwin, *Garden* 62).

E. A. Robinson had a like approach to straightforwardness in titles, calling the poem that follows, simply, "Sonnet." Robinson was twenty-seven and still living in his childhood home in Gardiner, Maine, when this metasonnet, Exhibit A in this exploration of the poetics of ecstasy, appeared in his first book, *The Torrent and the Night Before*, self-published in 1896 (Donaldson 121 – 124).

> Sonnet
>
> The master and the slave go hand in hand,
> Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave,

And there be kings do sorrowfully crave
The joyance that a scullion may command.
But, ah, the sonnet-slave must understand
The mission of his bondage, or the grave
May clasp his bones, or ever he shall save
The perfect word that is the poet's wand!

The sonnet is a crown, whereof the rhymes
Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones;
But shapes and echoes that are never done
Will haunt the workshop, as regret sometimes
Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones
The crash of battles that are never won (Robinson, *Torrent* 9).

And here is the version that Robinson included in the collection of his sonnets published as a signed edition by Crosby Gaige and a trade edition by Macmillan in 1928.

Sonnet

The master and the slave go hand in hand,
Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave,
And there be kings do sorrowfully crave
The joyance that a scullion may command.
But, ah, the sonnet-slave must understand
The mission of his bondage, or the grave

May clasp his bones, or ever he shall save
The perfect word that is the poet's wand.

The sonnet is a crown, whereof the rhymes
Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones;
But shapes and echoes that are never done
Will haunt the workship, as regret sometimes
Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones
The crash of battles that are never won (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25).

In the intervening thirty-two years, Robinson elected to make only two changes, one in the octave and one in the sestet. At first blush, both changes seem inconsequential, perhaps merely ornamental, for neither seems to drastically alter the expression of the poem. But, taken together, they offer an inkling into Robinson's sharp ear and reveal something of his process of revision. In the earlier version of the sonnet, the octave concludes with an exclamation mark, which Robinson replaced with a period. In the sestet of the later version of the poem, Robinson changed a single vowel in the fourth word of the twelfth line, rendering "workshop" as "workship". These two versions—one from 1896, the other from 1927—afford a diachronic duplexity that, as Pound might say, thickens one's reading of the poem. The change in punctuation in the octave from exclamation mark to period modulates the tone and modernizes the style, lessening a nascent poet's effervescence and heightening the gravitas and pathos of the serious stakes involved in the business of verbal art. The vowel change, which amounts to a change in word choice, is of even greater consequence, for the change also affects the morphological and semantic properties of the line's lexicon. Whereas "workshop" is a countable common noun, "workship" is an uncountable common noun that

is so rarely used that it no longer appears as an entry in the sixth edition, from 2007, of the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary*, its usage apparently denotatively subsumed by either the more common "workmanship" or "craftsmanship" (*Shorter* 3667). While "workshop" lends itself to a goldsmith's workplace, where the trope's "purest gold" is set with "jewel-stones," "workship" returns the meaning to the tenor, "Thought," rather than the metaphor's gilded vehicle.

So begins our reading of Robinson's metasonnet in terms of duplexity, which will occupy the remainder of this section of the dissertation. While Basho's haiku and Pound's couplet were effective at demonstrating readings of duplexity and dynamics in a poem, the pages that follow (of this chapter, this section on duplexity, and the rest of this dissertation) will apply such readings to Robinson's metasonnet, specifically its later iteration from 1927 (but, curiously, not its final iteration, for, in the posthumously published version of the poem in Robinson's 1939 *Collected Sonnets*, the change of punctuation in the octave was kept, but the change of wording was returned to the 1896 version) (Robinson, *Collected* 95). In short, the readings to come of Robinson's metasonnet are intended to serve as a touchstone toward a theory of poetry. I hypothesize that duplexities of artifice, when read, break symmetry to dynamically emerge as novel, complex, and synesthetic forms; in turn, these new forms form further duplexities of verse, eventually resulting in a thickening or condensation of artifice that distinguishes verse from prose, and this overwhelming effect of artifice, compounded through duplexity's dynamics, can bedazzle the reader of poetry into a state of ecstasy, one where the reader feels changed, affected by the poem in a dialogic way akin to the I-Thou ideal described by Martin Buber in *I and Thou*.

This state of poetic ecstasy is effectively a living duplexity of reader and poem. Perhaps more than any other aspect of the sonnet, it is the fighting forms of its stanzas, the octave and sestet, that characterize its poetics of dynamic duplexity. Of course, I am referring

here to what is often called the Petrarchan (or Italian) sonnet, though, as noted, Petrarch did not invent the form (Oppenheimer 3; Spiller 1, 45). It is the same form that, according to Oppenheimer and Spiller, was invented by the notary da Lentini sometime in the thirteenth century (Oppenheimer 18 – 25). Robinson's metasonnet is a Petrarchan sonnet, as were most that he wrote. Another variety of the form, perhaps invented to help accommodate the English poet's search for rhyme, is what is known as the Shakespearean (or English) sonnet, which is comprised of three quatrains and a couplet (Vendler 4 – 10, 22). Some poets, in writing a Shakespearean sonnet, offer a nod to the Petrarchan sonnet's storied volta between the octave and the sestet, but the real change of tack in this variety comes after the twelfth line, between the third quatrain and the final couplet. This structural change informs a change in rhetorical style—whereas the Petrarchan sonnet is dialectic, the Shakespearean sonnet builds up its thesis with conceits in each successive quatrain, adding torque to the eventual turn that will undermine the three-tiered thesis with the couplet's snap of antithesis. In contrast to the Petrarchan sonnet's more even divide between statement and counter-statement, the Shakespearean sonnet's volta at line twelve turns the couplet's reply into an epigram, which once, to Renaissance and Augustan readers, signaled wit and now, to more modern readers, has all the subtlety of a well-landed barb, whose sting of insult is redoubled by rhyme.

In Robinson's metasonnet, the division between octave and sestet is one of both structure and trope, but the stanzas act less as fighting forms and more akin to the self-described master and slave, which, despite their differences, are holding hands (though touch be lost). The octave is composed of three sentences across eight lines: lines one, two, three, five, six, and seven are enjambed; lines four and eight are end-stopped. The sestet, by contrast, is comprised of a single sentence, making its first five lines enjamb, though, arguably, the semi-colon in line ten acts as a kind of full stop. With each sentence, complexity

grows. The octave's first sentence is one and a half lines long, creating a solid caesura for the second sentence to begin, which concludes after two and a half lines, end-stopped at line four. Then, in a perfect quatrain, the third sentence of the octave is four lines long. Of interest, then, is the volta, whose use of space, especially in a self-reflexive sonnet, is assuredly meaningful. I see the meaning of the volta's turn here enacting the poet's powers of vision: The poet's wand renders the enjambed false starts leading to the perfect quatrain as if ended, and now the sonnet-slave, using the poet's lexical magic, has placed the poem firmly in the royal estate where the sonnet belongs, for the metaphor of the crown can either denote a king's ornamental headdress or, as a metonymy, authoritative power itself, the right of monarchal rule. The sestet's rhymes are jewel-stones, the work of the sonnet-slave's wand, words that are haunted by the jewel-stones that might have been, the specter of possibilities everlasting made possible by the inability to settle on a creative choice. The poet, in the caesura, has created a cypher: The sonnet is the master, and the poet is its slave, whose workshop or workship—whatever its joyance—are bent toward the master's rule. One strategy to reading Shakespeare's sonnets that Helen Vendler employs in the book that occupied me those many years ago in Honolulu entails finding the key words of a sonnet and using these words to hone one's reading of poetic artifice toward a lexically contextualized understanding of the poem (Vendler 75 – 77). In the octave, for example, the key words are drawn from the first line, "[t]he master and the slave". (The dynamic duplexities of the master and the slave will be addressed more fully in a later chapter, "Appositions of Metaphor".) Both words—"master" and "slave"—share an orthographical representation of a vowel, "a," but the phonological values of each differ. The vowel in the stressed syllable of "master" is

/æ/, the so-called near-open front unrounded vowel; whereas, the vocalized sound in the word "slave" is /eɪ/, a diphthong, essentially a duplexity of two vowels gliding into one another

within a single syllable. In this way, the words “master” and “slave” really do, orthographically, go hand in hand—witness the two instances of “a” in the idiom—though touch is, phonologically, lost. Following this observation that the key words and rhymes of Robinson’s metasonnet are so tethered, the /æ/ in “master” connects that trope to “hand,” “command,” “understand,” and, a slant rhyme, “wand”. The outlier of “wand” here self-reflexively highlights its singular qualities of poetic magic. The /eɪ/ of “slave” reflexively binds the key word to itself as the first of the second set of rhymes, followed by “crave,” “grave,” and “save”. While both individual threads of rhyming words intimate a narrative that coheres with their respective key words, when paired as couplets in the order that they are experienced by the reader, duplexities emerge: “hand” / “slave” // “crave” / “command” // “understand” / “grave” // “slave” / “wand”: the manual work of the slave; a craving of command; an understanding of the gravity at stake; and salvation by a magic stick that, in shape and purpose, echoes a pen.

Though I have been using the term as a synonym for poetry, the word *verse*, etymologically, means *to turn*, evoking the movement of a plow drawn by an ox and guided by a farmer or, in this case, the reader’s eyes as they follow, from left to right, a line of poetry to its end, pause, and return to the beginning of the next line at left before reading onward (Corn 7; Hollander 1 – 5). When syntax is broken by the line but not concluded by it, enjambment occurs, and, at that moment of the reader’s pause, a flicker of befuddlement can be heightened and rendered into delectation when the return to the beginning of the next line offers a surprise of apprehension. This effect of surprise is created through the manipulation of semantics. For example, consider how the ditransitive verb here is enjambed and what the effect on having the awareness of its object has on the reader: “God loves / a good joke” or “She woke with a headache because last night she drank / coffee well into the wee hours reading Tolstoy”. Enjambment is any construction that creates expectation through a line,

then, at the end of that line and as the reader begins the next, changes tack to force the reader to realign the meaning of the foregone line. In Robinson' metasonnet, the enjambments use, in the case of the first to second lines ("The master and the slave go hand in hand, / Though touch be lost.") a dependent clause (beginning with the relative pronoun "[t]hough" to semantically qualify the first line. The second to third lines are enjambed, though, because the line ends with the conclusion of an independent clause ("The poet is a slave,"), we know that what is coming will be a dependent clause, due to the punctuation cue of the comma, but, suspense is built into the construction of this first independent clause of the second sentence of the poem—subject, verb, object, using the copular verb at that, but the bald construct of the main metaphor of the stanza, ending the line with an echo of the powerful word from the first line, "slave," nevertheless piques readerly curiosity. Though the verb "crave" is transitive, not ditransitive (or otherwise capable of being intransitive), the enjambment works due to the foregoing syntax and lexical choices: The rare presence of the subjunctive in the third line cues the reader that something is afoot, especially as what follows is intriguing. After all, what do kings crave, and why do they crave sorrowfully, and why add such mystery with the base form of the verb *to be* rather than its simple present form, *are*, which would have communicated the same idea, albeit with less panache? Of course, the subjunctive does have a role in adding a timbre of timelessness to the poem's voice, and such a nod to yesteryear allows for the magic implied by the poet's wand to land squarely within the reader's ken of suspended disbelief. The enjambments of lines five, six, and seven work under the power of their end-words' gravity to fuel the reader's curiosity to the next verse—and the volta, which means *turn* in Italian, enjambs the stanzas (P. Levin xlix). Coming as it does at the end of line eight, the volta acts as a kind of super verse, where the chasm between stanzas underscores the wholesale nature of the poetic turn, and the poem changes tack from the octave, and the reader experiences the joy of surprise and, one hopes, apprehension at the

reading of the sestet. The threading of rhymes and the syntactic construction of the sestet drive the turns of verse—but two of its enjambments deserve special mention. In line eleven—"But shapes and echoes that are never done / Will haunt the workship"—Robinson has self-reflexively used the enjambment to describe what the enjambment does, continuing where an ending was expected. The artful construction of line thirteen lulls the reader, through the omission of telltale commas, in thinking that perhaps the object of the future-tense verb ("will bring") has come amid the muddiness of the prepositional phrases. Or, if the syntax of this ornate quality doesn't lull the reader, then its prosodic emphasis on "human yearning," which forces the mouth muscles to work, and the quick onset of the dactylic "sad thrones" create a pregnant expectation that something bittersweet is coming. And it does, evoking the fighting forms of the final lines of Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach": "And we are here as on a darkling plain / Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight, / Where ignorant armies clash by night" (Arnold 210 – 211).

Before summing up the foregoing analyses of duplexity in Robinson's metasonnet and drawing from the conclusion of these insights to suggest how they might account for the sonnet's unparalleled run of success as a form of verse, let us return to our thesis: As a poem is read, dyads of appositional features of language and artifice in a poem entangle and—à la Juri Lotman's coinage—*explode*, wherefrom novel forms emerge to semantically color succeeding duplexities, a process that can overwhelm the reader into an ecstatic state (Lotman, *Explosion* 19 – 24). This process, as noted, takes place in the mind of the reader. Every reader brings experience unique in its enzymatic unleashing of duplexity's dynamism as prompted by the features of language and conventions of poetic artifice (Rosenblatt 143 – 145; Tsur 496 – 500). In the reading of a poem like Robinson's metasonnet—enriched with both its own individual artifice and that of a centuries-old canon of sonnets as well as sonnets on the sonnet—the effect of duplexities perceived or experienced, as Pound suggests, thicken

the lines of the poem with psycholinguistic synesthesia. This dissertative plumbing, then, is concerned with the metaphysics of poetics. With the eye of a linguist and the ear of a poet, we are on surer ground in pointing to the effects of artifice on the reader. We are also on surer ground when we speak of duplexity and the plausible effects that comparing and contrasting relationships between linguistic features and poetic artifice take place, which the second part of this dissertation, focusing on the dynamics involved, will address. This theory of poetic ecstasy begins to take flight in its consideration of a philosophy of dialogue, whose third section will explore—but, really, even in this final part of the trivium of duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue, the means of how esemplasticity in a poem evokes ecstasy in the reader is simple. The elements of poetic artifice pair off as duplexes; the duplex elements interact dynamically; the duplex elements are in dialogue with other duplex elements—and, thanks to the role of synesthesia, the resulting dialogue is so heady with interactions that one feels as though standing outside oneself. In other words, the section of this study about dialogues puts an onus on the reader to consider the miniature dialogues of linguistic features and poetic artifice as affecting the greater dialogues of reader to poem and also reader to poet.

The theoretical nature of this study notwithstanding, dialogue is a natural extension of the sonnet form as noted in the previous descriptions of the fighting forms between octave and sestet. The sonnet is also uniquely positioned to furbish a dialogic claim to poetry at large by virtue of how it, like *renga* in the tradition among Japanese poets, served as a means of fostering poets' conversations with one another, both between contemporaries (as Dante details in *La Vita Nuova*) but also across time and space (as how, with his metasonnet, Robinson, for example, is responding to the metasonnets of Rossetti and Keats) (*Princeton* 750). This dialogic quality of the sonnet to foster conversations with other sonnets accounts for the success of sonnet sequences, not only of those storied narratives that sprang forth during the 1590s in England, including Shakespeare's, but also those written by

contemporary poets like Marilyn Hacker's aforementioned *Love, Death, and the Changing of the Seasons* from 1995 or Vikram Seth's novel written entirely in sonnets (including its acknowledgments, dedication, table of contents, and the author's bio), *The Golden Gate*, which was published in 1986. That language abounds in duplexities and is dynamic in construction—for speech occurs extemporaneously—is a given. Also given is the fact that conversations—ranging from topic to topic, where subjects of discourse are started and qualified by the contributions of both interlocutors—are dialogues that are composed of dynamic duplexities. It follows, then, that sonnets, which are notably dialogical, act in a like way, both within their own metapoetics and between poems by the same poet (as in a sonnet sequence) and other poets (through allusion). For example, in *Twentieth-Century Metapoetry and the Lyric Tradition*, Daniella Jancsó analyzes the sacred and profane binaries of a metasonnet by E. E. Cummings, thereby, for our purposes, lucidly illustrating the dialogical nature of modern American metasonnetry—not least do we learn that Cummings, like Robinson, found inspiration in the effects of dazzlement, that Paulian interplay of luminosity and blindness (Jancsó 114 – 116). Even in an era such as ours, that of the third decade of the twenty-first century, when mobile technologies have brought upon a sea change to literacy, as Sven Birkerts has written of, an effect that, along with the century-long ascendancy of free verse, as Timothy Steele has detailed, have rendered the reading of sonnets and their poetics, or sonnetry, into virtually lost knowledge, sonnet sequences are still being written. In fact, the word "sonnet" retains such allusive cachet that it has been coopted by poets who otherwise eschew the poetics of the form: Witness *American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin* by Terrance Hayes from 2018 and *Gravity and Center: Selected Sonnets, 1994 – 2022* by Henri Cole from 2023.

In many ways, the question of literacy—specifically that of poetic literacy—hovers above this discussion of duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue. This, of course, is because poetry

is a literary art, one composed of language—as Austin Warren and Réne Wellek assert at the start of their *Theory of Literature*—as sculpture may be composed of marble or bronze (Wellek and Warren 10). The difference between poetry and the plastic arts, arguably, is that a degree of skill is necessary to experience the aesthetic qualities of the artwork. Literacy, the ability to read, is perhaps too general a term for what is required to experience poetry to the fullest of the art's capability (Rosenblatt 162). What might account for disparity between the readerships of fiction and poetry (and what might account for the disparity between the readerships of free verse and formalist verse) might be the degree of literacy required to make the textual prompts work the magic of the poet's wand. John Gardner, in the *The Art of Fiction*, describes how the objective of the novelist is to evoke, through words, a dreamscape, one where the reader's mind cinematically transposes text into literary art (Gardner, *Fiction* 31). In that same book, whose subtitle is *Notes for Young Writers*, Gardner cautions the writer not to use language that might distract from the reader's dreamscape or otherwise unduly call attention to itself, for that, he says, is the realm of poetry, where the properties of language, such as word play, rhyme, or heightened metrical variations take place (106 –109). The penultimate chapter of this study will tender a series of pedagogical notes as to how an approach to teaching the reading of poetry in light of duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue in the hope of helping students attain the necessary literacy to read such a poem as Robinson's metasonnet. Before that, we will take a look into the challenges that present a contemporary reader of verse, problems that are less instances of individual illiteracy as they are the result of global changes to both the nature of poetry and the general way in which we now read.

> We need to bring the study of language and literature closer together. All too often, schools, universities and language-teaching instructions introduce a sharp boundary between the two domains. 'The language' is taught in one class; 'the literature' in another. It is time now to allow more language awareness into the literature class, and more literary awareness into the language class. Both sides, after all, have a focus on creativity. Language develops and changes through the creation of new words and sentences; literature, through the creation of new discourses (Crystal 130 –131).

David Crystal, the British linguist, asserts in *The Language Revolution*, published in 2004, that humanity's most important resource, language, due to factors both recent and historic, now occupies, upon quickly shifting sands, a place it has never stood before. Compared to his other books, such as *Encyclopedia of the English Language*, *The Language Revolution* is pithy at a mere one hundred and twenty-eight pages, but its title does not overstate the importance of its argument (Crystal 3 – 5). Indeed, its stunning thesis is that the diversity of the world's linguistic ecology—that is, our species' intellectual capital—has undergone, and continues to rapidly undergo, a loss of staggering proportions (106). Many have never heard of the issue of language death. As mentioned in the introduction to the book, Crystal notes that he and other linguists were slow to realize the magnitude of what they were observing (1). It was only after writing three other books about language—first, on the historic ascent of English as an international language; second, on the singular role of the internet on communication and literacy; and, third, on the unprecedented and worrisome acceleration of language death across the globe—that Crystal saw the interanimations of these three forces as revolutionary, one even greater than that wrought by Gutenberg. While

those three earlier works—*English as a Global Language* (1997), *Language and the Internet* (2001), and *Language Death* (2000)—share common ground (e.g. most of the internet is in English or English has displaced indigenous languages in the United States and elsewhere), the reckoning that the first and second trends were having on the third was made here in *The Language Revolution*. In addition to the lucidity of its analysis in identifying the problem, Crystal's book concludes with a clarion call to political engagement and a multi-point program that seeks to moderate the most deleterious effects of the language revolution (123 – 131). The insight offered in the epigraph to this chapter that the arts might be used toward a pedagogical and moral end is one such point. Furthermore, I see the role of this dissertative exploration into the poetics of duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue toward this important effort, for both historic and recent global changes in the wholesale nature of language, reading, and poetry itself have made verse more difficult to understand, appreciate, and enjoy. The first step in solving a problem is admitting that there is a problem.

In this chapter, the duplexity of language and literature come together to do just that. The first of three trends that David Crystal identifies as factors in the language revolution is the unprecedented ascendancy of English as a world language (or, given its role as a *lingua franca*, arguably *the* world language). Though English occupying this niche was hardly a foregone conclusion, as Crystal writes, at least one prominent seer of the late eighteenth century thought so.

> In 1780 the future US president John Adams said: 'English is destined to be in the next and succeeding centuries more generally the language of the world than Latin was in the last or French is in the present age.' But it took nearly 200 years before he was proved right. Only a relatively short time ago the prospect of English becoming a truly global language was uncertain (6).

The earliest form of the language began as the speech of an Anglo-Saxon tribe of Great Britain sometime in the fifth century whose native lexicon would eventually become awash with the influence of its invaders (which had the effect of simplifying its Germanic grammar). Contact with warring tribes from Denmark, the arrival of Roman soldiers, and, especially, the outcome of the Battle of Hastings in 1066 (which brought French to the English court, where it exercised an outsized influence that, for centuries, promulgated its Latinate vocabulary), all added to the store of the English word-hoard. The accidents of history that made England a naval power extended its linguistic reach to North America, Australia, India, Africa, and even Hawai‘i. Another accident of history—that one of England’s colonies evolved into a political superpower—furthered the reach of the language, not least to where U.S.-led wars invariably led to the soft-power wares of American culture (such as the Philippines, western Europe, Japan, South Korea, southeast Asia, and the Middle East) (10).

Over time, through pidginization and creolization, new varieties of English blossomed in these places of linguistic contact, which accounts for the palpable differences that distinguish, say, Nigerian English from South African English or the English spoken on Guam from that of American Samoa. These differences can be anatomized through observations of lexicon, phonology, syntax, and other linguistic markers. In the mid-twentieth century, English fully assumed its present role as an international language, a position that has only become more intractable since the advent of the second linguistic trend that Crystal cites as a component of the language revolution (87). Though there are more native speakers of Chinese than English, when non-native speakers are counted, English is the most spoken language in the world—but a more telling statistic is this: English is, by far, the language of the internet. In addition to the further accidents of history that made California the world’s supplier of computer hardware, computer software, and online technologies, the internet itself

is predominantly in English, which has enabled the language to spread to the farthest reaches of the planet. *The Language Revolution* was published in 2004, the same year that a nineteen-year-old named Mark Zuckerberg started an online networking service for fellow students of Harvard University that he dubbed TheFacebook—and, ever since, social media and mobile technologies have advanced to the point of ubiquity. Indeed, David Crystal asserts how their omnipresence in communication have singularly altered the writing of English, making it notably more informal and, in this way, more akin to speech (79). For the sake of convenience, including a desire to speed up response time (and avoid thumb fatigue), writers of text messages simplify syntax. Additionally, they also take shortcuts in the writing of a word or phrase—witness LOL (for "laughing out loud") or BRB (for "be right back") (81). In my work as a writing-center tutor, I have noticed that such neologisms, accompanied by their own conventions of usage and rules of grammar, have, alongside the permeating informality of email, seeped into altering the stylistic structures of more traditionally formal forms of writing, such as the cover letter to a résumé or the abstract of a journal article. Another significant development that has come since *The Language Revolution* was published is the role that artificial intelligence (AI) plays in the ways we now write. Extraordinarily, the writing of any text message now instantaneously engages a Brobdingnagian database of linguistic corpora that intuitively offer the writer multiple lexical choices. This technology is, effectively, the writer, delimiting the human role to that of a curator of diction and editor of phraseology. An even more portentous manifestation of artificial intelligence has arrived more recently with the likes of ChatGPT or Google's Gemini, which, save prompted directives, does away with the human writer altogether.

The third component cited by David Crystal fueling the language revolution is the global issue of linguistic endangerment and death. The horrible truth is this: Half of the world's languages will become extinct by the end of the century (49 – 50). In this, Ezra

Pound's tethering of poetry, an expression of language, with biology in his *ABC of Reading* is uncanny, for biologists have also made a like calculation that, by 2050, half of the world's species will become extinct. As diverse languages form bespoke perceptions and memories of experience in the world, and as they encode information, knowledge, and wisdom therefrom, this is an intellectual catastrophe of unprecedented magnitude. And, because most of the languages on the brink of extinction do not have a history of writing and have not been documented by research, we will not have the linguistic equivalents of fossils or trace DNA with which to apprehend the gravity of our loss. Language, for example, affects the colors that we see and the passing of time that we feel and the way we organize these experiences in the mind and the way we share them with others. In short, our species' ontological, phenomenological, and epistemological diversities will be immeasurably and forever lessened by this calamity. The factors for this global situation are historically entrenched—they include misguided or malevolent language-planning policies, a longtime and wholesale misunderstanding of the nature and value of multilingualism (or, as it is sometimes called, plurilingualism), and the social prestige of languages that promise financial, political, or even cultural power. (55) This is how English and Spanish, respectively, eventually overran the once unassailably diverse ecologies of indigenous languages in North America and Central America (48 – 49). The first and second global trends of the language revolution, the hegemonies of English and the internet, are also hastening the loss of linguistic habitats and, thereby, contributing to the endangerment and death of languages. Though David Crystal concludes his 2004 polemic on a note of hope with the suggestion that the vast reaches and illimitable resources of the internet might be harnessed to save endangered languages through education and advocacy, the clarion call to arms on this issue, some two decades since *The Language Revolution* was published, has yet to be made, let alone heard. With concurrent concerns of climate change, oceanic acidification, and the Holocene extinction, to say

nothing of pandemic and war, the catastrophic effects of language death upon our future will probably, tragically, only be realized in hindsight if at all.

In 2014, I attended a lecture in Stuttgart—or, rather, two lectures—that were put together by Ernst Klett Verlag, a German publisher of language-learning books, in celebration of its thirtieth anniversary. The audience was made up mostly of English teachers from Baden-Württemburg, and its speakers were David Marsh and David Crystal. Marsh spoke first about the methodology of learning languages called content and language integrated instruction (CLIL), which he himself created twenty years earlier. In CLIL, the pedagogical approach is to teach educational content through a target language—an example of this would be the teaching of American history in high school to students of English as a second language, which, ideally, would foster the learning of the language in tandem with the understanding of the subject itself. As an Australian educated in the United Kingdom who lives in Finland, Marsh's outlook on issues of language learning is impressively global. He spoke about his work in advising the Finnish educational system on digital learning platforms, noting how these technologies, for sundry reasons, were advantageous—they reduced costs, for instance, and aided the convenience of updating instructional materials. During the question-and-answer session that followed, I asked whether he himself, when wanting to learn something, read from an electronic device or a paperbound book. He smiled and said candidly, "I only read paperbound books." I followed up, then, asking whether there was any conclusive data about the role of media on learning outcomes, asking, in effect, "Which is better, e-book or old-school book?" To his credit, his candor continued, and he said that the jury was still out. Given the colossal stakes at hand, this left me dumbstruck.

Following Marsh's lecture and the publisher's gift of a surprisingly hearty lunch, I went back early to the cavernous hall, where I found David Crystal alone near the podium, preparing for his talk. As I entered, he said hello, and we chatted for a spell. Naturally, he

detected my American accent, which I confirmed, qualifying that it came from Hawai‘i. This piqued his interest, and he mentioned that he had recently participated in a documentary about endangered languages, which included, as a success story, a segment on the culture- and family-centered immersion schools where the Hawaiian language is taught. As I wished him well in the lecture, the audience began to settle in. As with Marsh, Crystal tailored his talk to the interests of his audience as teachers of English as a foreign language. Having read some of his generalist works on language (around the same time that I had read Vendler's *Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*), I was a bit star struck (as I had been with Marilyn Hacker), finding interest in Crystal's idiolect as much as the points under discussion. Even so, as Crystal spoke, I could not get *The Language Revolution* nor its haunting forecast of the catastrophic destruction to world's languages out of mind (5). To be sure, given the size of the audience, approaching the microphone a second time was unmannerly. Nevertheless, I felt compelled to ask of the author himself, dialogically and *in situ*, the question that his book had haunted me with for years. Admitting the fact that I was an English teacher who hailed from a place where English had supplanted the indigenous language, I said that I had read his book with alarm and concern: "Now, ten years after the publication of *The Language Revolution*, what future do you see one hundred years hence—or even five hundred years hence—for the world's linguistic diversity?"

By way of answer, Crystal downplayed the pessimism of my premise by referencing the relative resurgence of Hawaiian, a more capacious version of what he had said to me earlier about work on the documentary. As he spoke, my thoughts turned to the fact that Hawaiian was still moribund. Despite its moribundity, the language exudes prestige and cultural cachet, especially through music, and it has had the extraordinary luck of being situated in a place where language instruction, linguistic research, and cultural advocacy at two major university campuses, in Manoa and Hilo, along with community colleges and non-

profit educational organizations across the state are dedicated to assuring its survival. Even so, the bald truth was that there were more people attending the lecture that afternoon in Stuttgart than there are native speakers of Hawaiian. What fate, I wondered, do languages without such support have? As I left the lecture hall, I recalled a poem by Walt Whitman.

> When I heard the learn'd astronomer,
> When the proofs, the figures, were ranged in columns before me,
> When I was shown the charts and diagrams, to add, divide, and measure them,
> When sitting heard the astronomer where he lectured with much applause in the lecture room,
> How soon unaccountable I became tired and sick,
> Till rising and gliding out I wander'd off by myself,
> In the mystical moist night-air, and from time to time,
> Look'd up in perfect silence at the stars (Whitman 409 – 410).

Though I cannot recall, exactly, how my own turn to the celestial presented itself that afternoon in Stuttgart eleven years ago, anecdotes of my protracted stint as a tutor at LMU Munich's Writing Center now come to the fore. I recall, for example, an in-class workshop that I once gave to a room full of undergraduates on the citation of references, which included *de rigueur* admonitions on avoiding plagiarism as well as tips on how to paraphrase information that did not need to be verbatim. When the hour was up, I checked in to see whether there were any questions. There was only one: What do we need this for? As I began to talk about the importance of citing authority to buttress an argument, the student interrupted to qualify the question: What do we need this for when software already can write citations itself? Another anecdote comes to mind of a one-on-one tutoring session with a

graduate student whose level of spoken English belied the idiomaticity of his writing. Suspecting plagiarism, I pointed out the disparity, but the student assured me that the work was his. On his laptop, he showed me how Grammarly—cloud-based software that not only aids editing but detects plagiarism—works. I was astounded, for, from what I could see between his original draft and the software's revision, meaningful changes in semantics were made by the software and assented to by the student, who was none the wiser. And this was some years before ChatGPT and other AI software have made the unprecedented inroads they have in wresting language from the minds of its users. Taken together, the questions I asked of David Marsh and David Crystal address twin concerns—deleterious effects of technology on literacy and catastrophic losses of linguistic resources and cultural knowledge—and intimate one another. In addition to sea changes in reading and language, a revolution within the art of poetry itself has come, and it can now be seen as detrimental to its literacy, the skill that enables literary experience. This fraught duplexity that Marsh and Crystal inspired, seems to me, is echoed in the work of two writers whose arguments we will look to now—Sven Birkerts, who writes about the effects of technology on reading, and Timothy Steele, who writes about the history of how a revolution in modern poetry succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of its provocateurs.

The Gutenberg Elegies: The Fate of Reading in an Electronic Age and *Changing the Subject: Art and Attention in the Internet Age*, both by the American writer Sven Birkerts and published in 1994 and 2015, respectively, redouble the effects that the American poet Timothy Steele concludes in *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Meter* have brought us to the place where we are now, where the reading and writing of poetic artifice is a lost art. Birkerts, in a truism that is nevertheless striking in how it engages our trope of fighting forms, reminds us midway in his first book, *The Gutenberg Elegies*, that every true reader is a writer "and every true writer is a reader, and every person engaged in

the project of self-awareness is the reader and writer of himself, writer and reader: they are the recto and verso of language, which is itself the medium of our deeper awareness" (Birkerts, *Gutenberg* 114). If writers read in writing as readers write in reading, what happens when the message of the medium is revolutionized? Birkerts, in *Changing the Subject*, brings to bear his thoughts on how the internet singularly silences the salient quality that enables literary art to wave its wand of artifice toward a Poundian thickening and condensation: "This is the sum of all that I've been arguing: that cyberspace and reading space are opposed conditions" (Birkerts, *Changing* 168). Coincidentally, Birkerts' *Gutenberg Elegies* was published the same year that David Marsh created CLIL, and the kismet of this date affords an apposition underscoring their oppositional positions in the debate. While Marsh demurs that the jury is still out on the question of byte or book, Birkerts expresses due concern that "the long-term cognitive effects of these new processes of absorption" upon both the reader's comprehension and cognition are unknown (Birkerts, *Gutenberg* 138).

> Telephone, fax, computer-screen networks, e-mail, interactive television—these are the components out of which the hive is being built, the end of it all, the *telos*, is a kind of amniotic environment of impulses, a condition of connectedness. And in time—I don't know how long it will take—it will feel as strange (and exhilarating) for a person to stand momentarily free of it as it feels now for a city dweller to look up at night and see a sky full of stars (224).

The antiquated examples notwithstanding, we are intuitively wont to agree with Birkerts here, for his observation foretells of the dystopian vision depicted in the *Matrix* movies and hearkens back to Whitman's escape from the dazzlement of proofs, figures, and

columns. Like the stanzas of a Petrarchan sonnet, Birkerts' two studies complement each other—one working intuitively at the onset of the internet; the other, reflectively, after two decades, at what has been wrought. Whereas *The Gutenberg Elegies* intimates the problematic nature, on the mind of the reader, of internet technologies, and their effectiveness at neutering the power of a literary text, *Changing the Subject*, in a latter-day way, propounds that these technologies (and their worrisome advances) have eroded readerly abilities to experience, understand, and appreciate works of literary art, including poetry: "I believe that our encompassing, all-saturating technologies are altering our social and private worlds in ways that are, so far, at least, resistant to the pattern-making impulses of the imagination" (Birkerts, *Gutenberg* 242). Timothy Steele recounts T. S. Eliot's process of writing poetry directly on the typewriter, shaping his lines by how they looked over how they sounded; in this, the practice of composing, publishing, and reading poetry from an electronic device favors convenience and shortchanges what was once seen as a vital component of writing poetry, its slow revision by hand amid the quiet to test the worthiness of its duplexities of eye and ear. In *The Gutenberg Elegies*, Birkerts sums up the Faustian pact of these fighting forms of writing poetry thusly: "To me the wager is clear: we gain access and efficiency at the expense of subjective self-awareness" (220). The ability not only to read but, indeed, savor the synesthetic difficulties and complexities of what the Franco-American literary critic George Steiner called the poetry of thought as it is embodied in the Poundian thickening of poetic artifice demands such subjective self-awareness (Steiner 21 – 22). To coopt Birkerts' earlier truism, the poetry writers once read—over a century's hegemony of free verse, an effect redoubled by recent technology—has devolved into the prose that readers now write. The mindfully artless yet indolently attentive state of daydreaming that reading poetry affords is a figurative round hole to the square peg of digital distraction. Is this an exaggeration? "The subject," Birkerts acknowledges, "comes up a great deal in conversation these days.

Disputants, many of them writers, say to me, 'Words are still words—on a page, on a screen—what's the difference?'" (Birkerts, *Gutenberg* 154) What has, indeed, really changed? Much, says Birkerts: "The changes are profound and the differences are consequential" (154). To counter the argument that the reading experiences between device and book are akin, Birkerts elaborates, underscoring the important distinction between distraction and daydreaming:

> They are not the same thing. [...] Distraction is a shearing away from focus, a lowering of intensity, whereas daydreaming—the word itself conveys immersed intensity. Associational, intransitive: the attending mind is bathed in duration. We have no sense of the clock face; we are fully absorbed by our thoughts, images, and scenarios. Daydreaming is closer to our experience of Art (Birkerts, *Changing* 248).

In *Changing the Subject*, Sven Birkerts describes his own eventual capitulations to the onslaught of the internet age and how they have affected him as a writer—especially in how distraction leads to flitting between the writing at hand and the baubles of the online world—observing that "the steady centrifugal pull of the Internet blurs me, makes [...] subjective clarity harder to achieve" (169). Anecdotally, as a poet, I can add that this has been my experience as well. Since leaving social media entirely (save a lone profile on LinkedIn for reasons of work), my powers of concentration in reading paperbound books—non-fiction, poetry, fiction—have much improved. During my years of composing on a laptop (and toggling between Facebook and Twitter and e-mail), taking refuge in a real book—any book—at the end of the day was a struggle for focus and an exercise in frustration. Happily, in the months following my digital detox—I am, to wit, now composing these words, which

were drafted with a pencil on paper, on a manual typewriter—the readerly life of the mind that Birkerts justly celebrates returned.

> The time of reading, the time defined by the author's language resonating in the self, is not the world's time, but the soul's. [...] The energies that otherwise tend to stream outward through a thousand channels of distraction are marshaled by the cadences of the prose; they are brought into focus by the fact that it is an ulterior, and entirely new, world that the reader has entered (Birkerts, *Gutenberg* 85).

Sven Birkerts' passion for reading is matched by his compassion for the plight of readers—and, together, these qualities endue a dulcet poetry to his lucid prose. This realization brings to mind the memorable intermezzo of *The Gutenberg Elegies*, which the author himself dubs "an autobiographical fragment," wherein Birkerts recounts his origin story as a writer (33). Following the end of a relationship in rural Maine, where the young writer had begun to practice his craft in earnest, Birkerts returned to the college town of Ann Arbor, Michigan and, ever the bibliophile, found work as a bookseller. Around the same time, the Soviet émigré poet Joseph Brodsky had newly landed in Ann Arbor and was teaching at the University of Michigan. Not long after, the paths of Birkerts and Brodsky crossed in a bookstore, naturally, where their friendship began over a conversation about reading and writing. Eventually, Birkerts audited Brodsky's poetry workshop. In addition to discovering new vistas of writers discussed in class—as when, once, Brodsky pointedly asked, "Who is the darker poet, Mandelstam or Montale?"—it was Birkerts' realization that what reading demanded was the passion of a dialogical encounter (63). Amazingly, Brodsky's English, which was rudimentary when Birkerts met him, improved to the point where he, like

Vladimir Nabokov before him, began to write with great facility in his language of exile. "Poems," writes Birkerts in *Changing the Subject*, "are written out of a double intent: to give voice to the most urgent and elusive inner states; and to use language with the greatest compression and intensity" (Birkerts, *Changing* 218). This, of course, echoes Pound's and Forrest-Thomson's notions of the role of poetic artifice; it also intimates Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue that will conclude this study but certainly deserves to be foreshadowed here: The dynamics of the reading process unfiltered by the distraction of technology entails, as Birkerts opines, a "sense of being engaged with something ongoing, or being in relation" (163).

Another émigré poet who won the Nobel Prize was the American-born T. S. Eliot (1888 – 1965), who, after years of living in London, became a British subject in 1927, the same year that he joined the Anglican Church. Like Brodsky, Eliot embraced his adopted home, even developing an idiolect closer to the prestigious Received Pronunciation than that of St. Louis, Missouri, the city of his birth, or Boston, Massachusetts, his family's ancestral home. As poets, though, they differ greatly in their approaches to metrics, the prosody of verse. Eliot's found expression for his disdain of what is now thought of as formalist poetry in his essay, "The Music of Poetry":

> I have never been able to retain the names of feet and metres, or to pay the proper respect to the accepted rules of scansion. This is not to say that I consider the analytical study of metric, of the abstract forms which sound so extraordinarily different when handled by different poets, to be an utter waste of time. It is only that a study of anatomy will not teach you how to make a hen lay eggs (Eliot 18 – 19).

T. S. Eliot's wit here betrays his brahmin upbringing. Actually, that is exactly what the study of poultry science teaches—and, come to it, it also what the study of verse teaches—namely, the application of knowledge in the service of improving the art. Curiously, the connection made again between biology and language echoes Ezra Pound's proffered methodology of poetic analysis made in *ABC of Reading* (Pound, *ABC* 17). It also brings David Crystal's prediction of catastrophe, unheeded as Cassandra's, that, in a matter of decades, just as half of the world's species become extinct, so, too, will its linguistic diversity suffer a like fate (Crystal 5). And, speaking of dead languages, Eliot continues essaying the music of poetry by referencing the Greek of Homer and the Latin of Virgil, agreeing that, while he never really bothered to learn the metrics of either, there could well be value in such study. But, "in approaching the poetry of our own language, [...] it is only the study, not of poetry but of poems, that can train our ear" (Eliot 19). After some discussion of the influence of Latin and other languages on English poets, Eliot declares that what is most essential for poetry is that "it cannot afford to lose its contact with the changing language of common intercourse" (21). As to the subject at hand, whether literacy of artifice is important to the reader and writer of poetry, Eliot—who, in his collection of essays titled *On Poetry and Poets*, first published in 1943, in which "The Music of Poetry" appears, wrote appreciatively of Milton, Byron, and Yeats, sonneteers extraordinaire—is unequivocal: "[T]he music of poetry is not something which exists apart from the meaning" (21). This echoes the point made by Veronica Forrest-Thomson (in her critique of William Empson's failure to read the artifice of a sonnet by Shakespeare) discussed earlier. Here, Eliot intimates Juri Lotman's concept of explosion, which will be discussed at length in the second section of this dissertation, that the packed powder of poetic artifice is only a reader away from an aesthetic explosion that will radiate in the mind far beyond the scope of mere denotation or paraphrase. And the metaphysical duplexities occurring when symmetry is broken between the fighting

forms of what was written and what is read—including the shapes of lexical connotation and the echoes of literary allusion—are invariably singular, unique not only to every reader but every reading:

> If, as we are aware, only a part of the [poem's] meaning can be conveyed by paraphrase, that is because the poet is occupied with frontiers of consciousness beyond which words fail, though meanings still exist. A poem may appear to mean very different things to different readers, and all of these meanings may be different from the what the author thought he meant (22 – 23).

His disdain for the study of scansion notwithstanding, T. S. Eliot's appreciation for the dialogical qualities of poetry, which lay at the heart of this study, are expressed with straightforwardness: "The immediacy of poetry to conversation is not a matter on which we can lay down exact laws. Every revolution of poetry is apt to be, and sometimes to announce itself to be, a return to common speech" (23) John Milton made such an announcement, defending a break from rhyme (though, notably, not meter) in his preface to the revised edition of *Paradise Lost*, published in 1674. Milton explained that, to have used the jangling of rhymes in an epic, would have been distracting; so, instead, he wrote in lines of blank verse (Milton 180). Blank verse, of course, is the line of unrhymed iambic pentameter that Shakespeare used for his early seventeenth-century dramas and E. A. Robinson for his early twentieth-century Arthurian narratives (Gross and McDowell 60 – 61). As Eliot expressed earlier, meter is neither a cudgel to conformity nor a straightjacket to individual expression, for blank verse, handled by diverse poets, can be resplendently multifarious (Eliot 26). William Wordsworth, whose metasonnet appeared in the previous chapter, wrote in blank

verse as well, including “Lines Written a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,” which appeared in the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads*, published in 1798. Like Milton, Wordsworth defended, in a preface, the experimentation of the project, whose poems were also metrical (and often in rhyme): “The majority of the following poems [...] were written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of conversation in the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purpose of poetic pleasure” (Wordsworth, “Preface”). The poems thereof, which included four by Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Wordsworth sought to not only make such classes the subject of poetry but, as “a return to common speech,” make the language itself of such classes the material of metrical poems (Eliot 23). Revolutions in poetry, up until the modern revolt detailed in Timothy Steele’s thorough account, used meter the same way that revolutions throughout the history of music continued to use notation. Which is all by way of saying that Milton and Wordsworth were successful in their efforts to renew the languages of epic and lyric—no small feat—because they had learned how to teach a hen to lay eggs.

How does music in poetry come to be? That is, how is ink on the page sublimated into song in the mind? The metaphysics of what Robinson, in his metasonnet, calls “the poet’s wand” (which linguists deem the lexicon)—or Eliot, the egg of a hen (or prosody)—is described here with fidelity in these two passages, drawn from Birkerts’ *Gutenberg Elegies* and Eliot’s “The Music of Poetry,” respectively. Cogently described, this is how poetry—through duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue—creates, through the artifice of meter, “shapes and echoes that will never end”:

> The word is a serpent eating its tail; it is the sign that disappears into its act of signing—the signing is not complete until the word has disappeared into its puff of meaning. At the instant of apotheosis it ceases to be itself; when it has brokered the transaction, it vanishes, reappearing only when the eye has

> moved on. This is the paradox of paradoxes: The word is most signifier when it least signifies (Birkerts, *Gutenberg* 78).

> The music of a word is, so to speak, at a point of intersection: it arises from its relation first to the words immediately preceding and following it, and indefinitely to the rest of its context; and from another relation, that of its immediate meaning in that context to all the other meanings which it has had in other contexts, to its greater or lesser wealth of association (Eliot 25).

Timothy Steele titles his history of the ascendancy and hegemony of free verse, published in 1990, *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt Against Meter*. The book's subtitle speaks to both the radical nature of the turn and the permanence of its outcome. Meter, as Steele defines it, does not delimit poetic expression; rather, like the rules of chess or syntax, meter enables infinite possibilities of expression. For instance, Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, and Frost all wrote poems in blank verse that differ not only from one another's work but also from their own work written in the same meter. Again, given their own reading practices as poets, the revolt from verse advocated by T. S. Eliot and Ezra pound is perplexing. Whatever Eliot's thoughts were on the length of time required for free verse to achieve its revolutionary ends (when he writes, again in "The Music of Poetry," that "[e]laborate forms return: but there have to be periods during which they are laid aside") is immaterial, for the revolt against meter has been made permanent (31). And this permanence ensures enduring permanence—redoubling the revolt of meter (and its consequences) self-reflexively with each successive generation, for the loss of familiarity with poetic forms resulted in an illiteracy of how to read them, which, in turn, has determined the prosaic course of free verse. In other words, poets now write the way they write out of

ignorance as much as art. Eliot's assurance that "forms return" was justified—forms have returned along (as has their cachet)—but, as we will see in the coming pages, the revolt against meter was wholesale. In the previous chapter, we saw how Donald Hall's questions to T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound about the influence of E. A. Robinson were received. One wonders how the two elder statesmen of modern poetry might have answered Hall had he framed the question this way: What would happen to poetry if poets continue to eschew form? Timothy Steele ventures this, echoing Donald Hall's polemical conclusion to his essay on Robinson:

> What happened was different from what the leaders of the modern movement anticipated. Their revolution triumphed. But a new metric did not emerge. The interim period was repeatedly and indefinitely extended. Originally a means of examining the old measures or of testing whether new measures were possible, free verse itself became "a form". Whereas the early experimentalists had pursued heterodox versification in the interests of poetic purity, their followers employed such procedures in an increasingly casual fashion, the revolution having undermined the metrical tradition and metrical awareness that gave the procedures significance in the first place (Steele 280).

Published in 1929, I. A. Richards' *Practical Criticism*, which famously revealed the well-cloaked dearth of knowledge about poetry and poetics in the academy, alongside *The New Criticism* by John Crowe Ransom, published in 1941, which placed a premium on reading poetry through the artifice of form, suggest that the pendulum of literary fashions had also begun to swing in the opposite direction not long after of the period described in Steele's appraisal. Despite the counterstatements of Richards' and Ransom's influential texts, had the

Eliot- and Pound-led corrective been achieved? Had the little doilies of Victorian verse been vanquished, so that the elaboration of poetic forms, renewed in the revolt, could return to an enlightened understanding through a new metric for poetry? No, answers Steele, "a new metric did not emerge" (Steele 280). Moreover, "the inheritors of the legacy of the modern movement, their numbers growing from decade to decade, simply went on writing without meter" (280). The resulting loss of knowledge presented a growing information gap that the market sought to fill. And, so, a cottage industry of primers about poetry began, which continues to this day. Unlike textbooks, which have always played a significant role in the learning of poetic principles and the introduction of seminal poems to students of every age, these primers about poetry are generalists and written toward the interests of an educated lay reader. Two early works of this sort are Brander Matthews' *A Study of Versification*, published in 1911 and Enid Hamer's *The Metres of English Poetry*, published in 1930. That Matthews' work was reprinted in 2007 and Hamer's as late as 2021 suggests the continuing interests and needs of its readership vis-à-vis prosody, poetics, form, and, notably, engaging the foregoing three, sonnetry.

In the 1990s, a poetic movement that has been since labeled New Formalism fueled an interest in prosody, which brought out a slew of new books to update Matthews and Hamer, including Mary Oliver's *A Poetry Handbook: A Prose Guide to the Understanding and Writing Poetry* in 1994, Alfred Corn's *The Poem's Heartbeat: A Manual of Prosody* in 1997, and Robert Pinsky's *The Sounds of Poetry: A Brief Guide* in 1999. While these three latter-day primers use examples of verse to illustrate whatever point is being made, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse* by John Hollander, first published in 1981, does something different. Interspersed with explanations in prose, Hollander's handbook is chockful of self-reflexive verse, where, say, a sonnet on a sonnet explains the workings of a sonnet or a sestina on a sestina does the same for that form of verse. Hollander even includes a small

treasury of others' instances of self-reflexive verse, such as Donald Hall's sestina on Ezra Pound's sestina and even the 1939 version of Robinson's metasonnet. Needless to say, the wit and pedagogical design, which echoes David Marsh's approach of content and language integrated learning, *Rhyme's Reason* remains popular and in print. An updated edition of the book was published in 2014 by Yale Nota Bene of Yale University Press that includes a foreword by J. D. McClatchy and an afterword by Richard Wilbur.

Another aspect of remedying the loss of knowledge resulting from modern poetry's revolt of meter lies in bolstering a morbibund lexicon of terms from prosody and poetics that has been lost through attrition, for their embodiments in the canon are now little read. Babette Deutsch's *Poetry Handbook: A Dictionary of Terms*, published in 1957, is an early example of this. Two encyclopedic approaches to the lexical refurbishment for readers and writers of verse forms—both of which heralded the movement of New Formalism and were published in 1986—are Miller Williams' *Patterns of Poetry: An Encyclopedia of Forms* and Lewis Turco's *The New Book of Forms: A Handbook of Poetics*. Derek Attridge's *Moving Words: Forms of English Poetry* expertly addresses the ways and means of the auditory shapes in poetic design. Designed for use in literary criticism is the authoritative third edition of *The Princeton Handbook of Poetic Terms*, edited by Roland Greene and Stephen Cushman and published in 2016, drawing on the latest edition of the compendious *Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, also edited by Greene and Cushman and published, as a fourth edition, in 2012. Even more recently is *The Essential Poet's Glossary* by the American poet Edward Hirsch, published in 2017, another general reference. To his credit, Hirsch has surveyed the needs of readers having written two other primers that deserve mentioning. Hirsch's *How to Read a Poem and Fall in Love with Poetry,* published in 1999, is one of many books whose titles echo the revised edition *How to Read a Book* by Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren, published in 1972 and reprinted in 2014. Other recent examples of such how-to books

in this vein, geared for the educated lay reader, whose abundance is testament to readerly need include: Molly Peacock's 1999 *How to Read a Poem...and Start a Poetry Circle*, Shira Wolosky's 2001 *The Art of Poetry: How to Read a Poem*, Terry Eagleton's 2012 *How to Read a Poem*, Tania Runyan's 2014 *How to Read a Poem, Based on the Billy Collins Poem "Introduction to Poetry,"* Stephanie Burt's 2019 *Don't Read Poetry: A Book About How to Read Poems*, and Thomas H. Ford's 2021 *How to Read a Poem: Seven Steps*. This recent flurry of generalist interest in poetic form has caught the attention of academics as well—witness Angela Leighton's *On Form: Poetry, Aestheticism, and the Legacy of a Word* in 2008, Derek Attridge's *Moving Words: Forms of English Poetry* in 2017, and Caroline Levine's *Forms: Whole, Rhythm, Hierarchy, and Network* in 2015. Written a century after the hegemony of free verse began, these works, in addition to literary fence-mending, were published to remedy the general state of poetic illiteracy wrought by the revolt against meter.

And this brings us to the curious place where American poetry finds itself now, at sea, for, though the foregoing primers detail that an interest in poetic form has ascended, readers, not least poets themselves, are still reckoning the loss of literacy to read poetry in meter and its attendant closure of access to centuries of canonical work. With its notorious reputation preceding it—as we saw with Virginia Woolf's wit and Ezra Pound's damnation—the sonnet embodies this instance of socio-poetics at work, where the form still possesses cachet to poets unfamiliar with its storied past and open possibilities as a duplex form of potential dialogue. Two recently published, favorably reviewed collections of sonnets by American poets exemplify this—the aforementioned *American Sonnet to My Past and Future Assassin* by Terrance Hayes, published in 2016, and *Gravity and Center: Selected Sonnets,* 1994 – 2022 by Henri Cole, published in 2023. In their sonnets, both Hayes and Cole eschew metrics, rhyme, and, often, both the volta and fourteen-line superstructure. All of the sonnets in Hayes'

collection have the same title, “American Sonnet for My Past and Future Assassin”; this one, a metasonnet, has received much acclaim:

> I lock you in an American sonnet that is part prison,
> Part panic closet, a little room in a house set aflame.
> I lock you in a form that is part music box, part meat
> Grinder to separate the song of the bird from the bone.
> I lock your persona in a dream-inducing sleeper hold
> While your better selves watch from the bleachers.
> I make you both gym & crow here. As the crow
> You undergo a beautiful catharsis trapped one night
> In the shadows of the gym. As the gym, the feel of crow-
> Shit dropping to your floors is not unlike the stars
> Falling from the pep rally posters on your walls.
> I make you a box of darkness with a bird in its heart. Voltas
> of acoustics, instinct & metaphor. It is not enough
> to love you. It is not enough to want you destroyed (Hayes 11).

In the afterword to *Gravity and Center*, Cole, like Milton and Wordsworth, defends his poetics in a way that hearkens Eliot’s bit about not being able to teach the hen to lay eggs:

> I believe a poem is a sonnet if it behaves like one, and this doesn't mean rhyming iambic pentameter lines. [...] For some reason the lean, muscular body of the sonnet frees me to be simultaneously dignified and bold, to appear somewhat socialized though what I have to say may be eccentric or unethical, and, most important of all, to have aesthetic power while writing about the tragic situation of the individual in the world (Cole 153).

These poems by Hayes and Cole, then, are something closer to quatorzains rather than sonnets. They are impressionistically-written in (occasionally) fourteen lines of free verse that do away with the sonnet's burden of complex poetics and centuries of canon—which, historically, sonnets, such as the metasonnets of Rossetti and Keats, have valiantly sought to engage. Marketed as sonnets, such latter-day poems seem to capitalize on the form's cachet.

And, again, publishers—including prestigious university presses—have responded to the information gap resulting from the loss of metrical knowledge and familiarity with the canon with books for the educated lay reader on, indeed, how to read a sonnet: *The Sonnet* by Stephen Regan, published in 2019 by Oxford University Press; *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet* by A. D. Cousins and Peter Howarth, published in 2012; *The Art of the Sonnet* by Stephen Burt and David Mikics, published in 2010 by the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press (which also published Helen Vender's *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*); and, again, the indefatigable Edward Hirsch, this time with Eavan Boland, edited *The Making of a Sonnet: A Norton Anthology*, published in 2008. Dora Malech and Laura T. Smith edited *The American Sonnet: An Anthology of Poems and Essays*, which was published by the University of Iowa Press in 2022, which was the result of a conference that took place in 2021 during the lockdowns of the COVID-19 pandemic. Via Zoom, I spoke at the conference for a quarter hour, piloting early thoughts on how the complexity of artifice

attending Robinson's metasonnet might be read dialogically. No questions came during the panel's question and answer period. The questions that did come—and the answers tendered in response—had me silently channeling Marilyn Hacker's frustration in the prosody workshop at City College almost twenty years earlier: "I bet no one here can recite a sonnet of Shakespeare's from memory."

As Sven Birkerts' explorations into the challenges of reading in the age of the internet make clear, literature, for all its richness, is demanding as an art. Reading novels is demanding, and reading essays is demanding—both fiction and non-fiction, in different though equal measures—for there is a syllabus of linguistic complexity that a reader must disentangle for the art's magic to even begin taking place—lexemes, syntax; semantics, pragmatics; and on and on. When the rhetorically artful stuff of prose is rendered into verse, the demands of reading are raised exponentially, for the reading of poetry demands more of us as readers. In addition to what must be attended to in prose, poetic literacy demands a facility with the conventions and traditions of the art. The reader unfamiliar with how to read, say, enjambed lines of verse or weigh emotions evoked at assonance is left with a lesser aesthetic experience, much in the manner that a visual impairment affects one's aesthetic experience in the gallery or a hearing disability at the concert hall. Reading a poem demands vast knowledge of its historical forebears, for lyrical art is heightened by allusion—Homer's *Odyssey* begets Virgil's *Aeneid*, which begets Dante's *Comedy*, which begets Eliot's *Waste Land*, which begets Walcott's *Omeros*. Can one profitably read poetry without considering the echoes of what came before? Certainly, one can, but—because poets write allusively and engage with other works of poetry syntopically as they do the world—such a reading of poetry is, as Pound might say, less thickened or condensed as such a work of art is at its best. Furthermore, citing the example of E. A. Poe, the recycling of texts, as Klaus Benesch observes in *Romantic Cyborgs: Authorship and Technology in the American Renaissance*, is

less a metapoetic tic than it is a heuristic approach to the art (Benesch 103). Such knowledge and understanding of poetic artifice enable readers' comprehension of historical works of poetry—and as these historical works of poetry enable readerly comprehension of modern and contemporary poetry—then, the onus falls to the reader to meet the demands of verse. This, of course, is not easy. To make sense of the complexity and depth of a poetic text, the attentiveness of the reader must be high, and the distractions of the text (such as those brought on by electronic devices) must be low. The need for this, by now, should be clear: Poetry's meaning is created by subtleties of language that can be elided in prose without detriment to comprehension. Recall Eliot's admission that the music of poetry goes beyond the denotative scope of mere words. This kind of reading is one of passionate engagement—it is one where even punctuation, the distinction, say, between an exclamation mark or a period, can be meaningful. In his first edition of *How to Read a Book*, published in 1940, Mortimer J. Adler suggested that the highest form of reading, that to which we should aspire, has been practiced by virtually all readers at some point in their lives. When readers are in love and reading love letters, then, when the stakes cannot be any higher, they read for all they are worth. This, finally, is what poetry demands.

Ceasefire

I

Put in mind of his own father and moved to tears
Achilles took him by the hand and pushed the old king
Gently away, but Priam curled up at his feet and
Wept with him until their sadness filled the building.

II

Taking Hector's corpse to his own hands Achilles
Made sure it was washed and, for the old king's sake,
Laid out in uniform, ready for Priam to carry
Wrapped like a present home to Troy at day break.

III

When they had eaten together, it pleased them both
To stare at each other's beauty as lovers might,
Achilles built like a god, Priam good-looking still
And full of conversation, who earlier had sighed:

IV

'I get down on my knees and do what must be done
And kiss Achilles' hand, the killer of my son.' (Longley)

On February 7, 2018, poet Michael Longley read “Ceasefire,” along with other poems recently rendered into German, before a full house in Munich’s Lyrik Kabinett, one of the largest poetry libraries in Europe. I was there, too, and can attest to the reception of the audience, most of whom spoke English as a second language, as being unusually quiet and attentive. As he often does, Longley prefaced the reading of “Ceasefire,” a Shakespearean sonnet, by speaking of its inspiration, which came during a time of whispered rumors of a ceasefire during the Troubles, a period of sectarian violence in Northern Ireland that lasted from 1968 to 1998. Like Longley, the poet Seamus Heaney was also from Northern Ireland and found—as his sequence “Glanmore Sonnets” illustrates—the form of the sonnet especially conducive to reckoning with the Troubles. As Longley was reading “Ceasefire” that evening in Munich, there was a palpable lengthening of time, or so it seemed, which made the dramatic acts of the lyrical stanzas, marked by Roman numerals, feel as epic as their mythological theme. Indeed, the poem’s title, an anachronism, forms a duplexity of fighting forms between itself and the body of the poem: The title lends its contemporaneity to the mythopoetics of the Trojan War, which, in turn, lend the title gravitas, through the shorthand of allusion, thereby allowing Longley to be so concise with so weighty a theme. In terms of metaphor, the premise of the title is borne by the poem—the fighting forms of Achilles and Priam embody the expression made by Franz Marc in the painting. Yet, in the world of the poem, the ceasefire is set not at the onset of breaking symmetry but at the moment of its return to a reprisal of symmetry, which evokes the concept of encounter espoused by Martin Buber that will be covered in greater measure in the third section of this study. The volta-like turn after the third quatrain jaunts the reader to a time when the pangs of grief were sharpest, making this a model of effective turning in a sonnet, an effect redoubled by the happenstance of the turn falling back to the affective crux of the metaphorical duplexity’s fighting forms.

In the previous chapter, I referenced Terrance Hayes sonnet sequence—*American Sonnets for My Past and Future Assassin*—with a less than flattering summation, crassly suggesting that the poet was, in effect, less subverting the form so much as riding on its coattails. That was not only unfair but outright wrong. In re-reading the poem in the manner advocated by Birkerts and Adler (and Hirsch, et al.), the very way that I had not read the poem before, I now see the achievement of Hayes' metasonnet as extraordinary and, to my delight, uncanny in its parallels with E. A. Robinson's own, which presents this study with yet another duplexity. To begin with, Hayes announces that this sonnet—this American sonnet, alluding to Wanda Coleman's own sequence, *American Sonnets*, published as a chapbook in 1994, addressing the subject of race through like expressions of a looser adherence to formal strictures—will differ by his reversal of the stanzaic order of the Petrarchan sonnet, putting the sestet first (which can be identified through the verb phrase "I look") and the octave (identified by the verb phrase "I make") second. This inversion of form encourages the reader to take notice, ponder, and look again without prejudice. As with Longley's "Ceasefire," Hayes' title and poem form a duplexity, and, as with Robinson's, Hayes' metasonnet self-reflexively plumbs the form, forming yet another duplexity. As with Longley and Heaney, Hayes' sonnetry here marries the personal to the political, evoking the extra-poetical designs of John Milton (as in his sixteenth sonnet to Cromwell). And, unlike Robinson, Hayes' metasonnetry is addressed to a specific (if fictive) addressee, his past and future assassin.

By using the second-person pronoun, *you*, Hayes melds metapoetic discourse with readerly culpability. And, again, as with Longley's sonnet, Hayes exploits the nexus of the form's properties of duplexity through appositions of opposition: The sonnet is described, alternatively, as "part prison, / Part panic closet" or "part music box, part meat / Grinder" (Hayes 11). These pairings are a prelude to that of the poem's overarching duplexity of

metaphor, that of “gym & crow”. To be sure, the word play is not subtle, nor is it meant to be, as the reversal of the stanzaic order and allusion to Coleman’s sequence forewarned. In the octave, the verb phrase “I make” is itself a duplexity of metapoetics—after all, a poet, not least in etymology, is a maker—and what Hayes makes, as what Milton made, is a statement for the ages, one capable of withstanding what Shakespeare called in his sixty-fifth sonnet “the wrackful siege of batt’ring days” (Vendler 303). Jim Crow laws passed by southern state legislatures codified post-bellum racism into U.S. law between the Civil War and the Civil Rights movement. Though these laws have since been overturned, the societal legacies of these laws have not been entirely vanquished as present-day resistance to the Black Lives Matter movement and campaigns against the teaching of critical race theory attest. After creating a duplexity of similes—“[a]s the crow,” “[a]s the gym,”—Hayes brings both together as “a box of darkness with a bird in its heart”, which echoes the first line of the poem (“I lock you in an American sonnet that is part prison”), a deft move in terms of metasonnetry, locking and making the reflexive poetics of the bifurcated form bend and turn on itself, just the like the ouroboros, beginning anew after ending ad infinitum (Hayes 11). In this way, the Nietzschean eternal return of the poem mirrors the African-American experience and—even more than a century and a half since the ratification of the Thirteenth Amendment, which ended slavery—its never-ending cycles of privation and violence and deprivation at the hands of entrenched racism.

In *More than Cool Reason: A Field Guide to Poetic Metaphor* by George Lakoff and Mark Turner, employing the three basic terms that I. A. Richards put forth, the entanglement of a metaphor’s tenor (or that which is to be compared) and its vehicle (that which is compared to) through its ground (that which affords the comparison) is noted as a powerful aid to the cognitive conceptualization between interlocutors (Lakoff and Turner xi – xii; Richards, *Principles* 188 – 189). In other words, metaphors make communication easier

because they make pictures out of thoughts, which, in turn, enrich discourse in the way the introduction of new ingredients and spices will flavor the bland taste of watery soup. Additionally, Lakoff and Turner see metaphor's powers of conception, which they illustrate through the verse of Shakespeare and Horace, as key to the transubstantiation of the pedestrian into the poetic. The means by which metaphors do this to language are manifold. Metaphors, for example, can extend a concept beyond the scope of everyday description; metaphors can also elaborate a concept in a like way or even question it. Most importantly, metaphors make possible the creation of composite conceptions that complexify the duplexities of metaphors' tenors and vehicles, thereby allowing them to be further and endlessly extended, elaborated, and questioned. Lakoff and Turner thus delineate the semantic workings of composite metaphors such as Hayes' gym and crow, Longley's Achilles and Priam, and Robinson's master and slave. To refer to these reigning tropes, we might employ the term that the linguist Zoltan Kövecses coined for them—megametaphors, which specifically refers to metaphors that run through an entire literary work, as the three aforementioned metaphors of duplexity do (Kövecses 325, 327). Such megametaphors, or metaphysical conceits (as T. S. Eliot called them), can also extend to encompass elements that were not, at the outset, initially or intentionally mapped by the metaphor. The poet's imagination as channeled through word choice—as Robinson suggests with his metaphor of the poet's pen as a wizard's wand—is vital for ensuring that figurative language does not devolve into shopworn cliché and remains fascinatingly fresh (or, as a Russian formalist might say, strange). To define the term already used, composite metaphors are comprised of two or more (sometimes many more) metaphors, similes, or other figurative constructions (such as idioms or adages). Hayes', Longley's, and Robinson's are all instances of composite metaphors. In the self-reflexive sonnets by Hayes and Robinson, the duplexities of these composite metaphors—of gym and crow, of master and slave—not only break the fourth wall

but serve as an extra- or counter-discourse to the denotative and sentential expressions of the poems and their artifice as *ars poeticas*. In other words, the composite metaphor of a metasonnet, with its hardware hidden, can insidiously break the readerly fourth wall as a metapoetic expression to affectively color or rhetorically counter readerly opinions on the limitations of the form itself. Even before recollecting how Virginia Woolf mocked that tome on the Elizabethan sonnet's history in "Why" (and before recalling how William Shakespeare's Elizabethan sonnets skewered Petrarchan bathos), we, as readers, are drawn in as our minds' eyes and ears succumb to the bauble of the babble invoked by the poet's Faustian waving of the wand. "Through the masterful use of metaphoric procession which our conceptual systems are based," expound Lakoff and Turner, "poets address the most vital issues in our lives and help us illuminate those issues, through [...] extension, composition, and criticism" (Lakoff and Turner 215).

Like the megametaphorical dyads of Terrance Hayes and Michael Longley, E. A. Robinson's is a duplexity of dialogical dynamics. The first five words of the poem—"[t]he master and the slave"—introduce the metaphysical dyad whose coupled interplay will become entwined with, as subtext, the text of the sonnet on the sonnet. And the first sentence—comprising the first line and, with a telling enjambment, the first two iambic feet of the second, "[t]hough touch be lost"—reveals a dialectic of disquietude. Even so, the outcome of Hegel's own famous pairing of the same in *The Phenomenology of the Spirit*, rendered in English here by Terry Pinkard, deserves citation at some length:

> To the servile consciousness, pure form can as little become the essence as can the pure form – when it is taken as extending itself beyond the singular individual – be a universal culturally forming activity, an absolute concept.

> Rather, the form is a skill which, while it has dominance over some things, has dominance over neither the universal power nor the entire objective essence. (Hegel 116)

In concert with Robinson's composite metaphor, Hegel's description of the servile consciousness sheds light on the relationship between the Eliotian (cf. "Tradition and Individual Talent") and Bloomian (cf. *The Anxiety of Influence*) appositions of individual talent and literary tradition. Indeed, the dialogism at work in Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave, sounding echoes of Bakhtin and Buber, mirrors uncannily that of Robinson's own. So taken, Hegel's passage here makes clear that the sonnet is neither panacea nor cookie cutter, and its deployment of artifice bears, as noted earlier, no guarantee of bringing the reader to a state of poetic ecstasy. As a slave, of course, the poet is hardly omnipotent in this regard, nor, as form, is the sonnet. Like the dovetailing that John Donne refers to as "interanimations" in his poem "The Ecstasy," Hegel and Robinson are akin in how they depict the master and the slave, both, as bound yet enfranchised, as beholden to one another, and as effecting a sea change amid the emergence of their ongoing encounter. Like Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms*, Robinson's entwined tropes of agency break the symmetry and, through encounter, emerge, through interchange, as changed, more akin to the other than they were before. To foreshadow the first chapter of the third section of this dissertation, "*I and Thou*," Robinson's master and slave—that is, respectively, his sonnet and poet—grow through encounter and dialogue to become entangled. This chapter, then, will look to E. A. Robinson's reigning metaphor with a keen eye. In doing so, we will read its limpid lines and bold enjambments to anatomize the duplexities that comprise its manifold contributing metaphors, which complexify the relationship between the metaphorical master and slave. To do this, we will trace the stative evolutions of the megametaphor's duplexity sentence by

sentence, noting the role of artifice in coloring the reading of the poem's lineation. As we saw depicted Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms*, the sentences in the Robinson's metasonnet detailing the relationship of the master and the slave toggle between coordination and subordination. To avoid the pitfall, again, that Veronica Forrest-Thomson charges William Empson's reading of a sonnet by William Shakespeare, our exploration into Robinson's composite metaphor and its lesser (though instrumental) metaphors that extend, elaborate, and question the bond between the two agents of the poem, a reading that strives for accurate naturalization by considering the poetic artifice of the sonnet will be pursued. So, while it is necessary to disentangle the poet's impressively ornate syntax in places, the poetics that inform the semantic meaning of the sentences, that act as fighting forms, will be considered. Here, then, following the poem, sentence by sentence, is a reading of the megametaphor of the 1928 version of E. A. Robinson's metasonnet.

Sonnet

The master and the slave go hand in hand,
Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave,
And there be kings do sorrowfully crave
The joyance that a scullion may command.
But, ah, the sonnet-slave must understand
The mission of his bondage, or the grave
May clasp his bones, or ever he shall save
The perfect word that is the poet's wand.

The sonnet is a crown, whereof the rhymes

Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones;

But shapes and echoes that are never done

Will haunt the workship, as regret sometimes

Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones

The crash of battles that are never won (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25).

The reader in reading takes in the title of the poem, "Sonnet," and considers its plainspokenness, wondering, perhaps, whether the title merely identifies the form of the poem (inviting a premise to be either validated or undone). The space between the title and the start of the poem itself acts as a grand enjambment, slyly defining the metaphor even before the reader has encountered the verb of the first line: Sonnet = The master and the slave. More abstractly, the true vehicle at work here might be seen as Robinson's sonnet (as readers come to learn of the poem's reflexivities and metapoetics) for the tenor of the concept of the sonnet form, which would subordinate the megametaphor of the master and the slave as the reigning, if instrumental, part of an even larger composite metaphor. However conceived, the metaphorical duplexity of the master and the slave is what must be closely read in order to learn the poet's thoughts on the subject at hand—namely, the art of the sonnet. Following the title, the substantive duplexity functions grammatically as a plural noun, informing the reader that the master and the slave, though tethered through the coordinating conjunction, are discrete individuals, something made all the clearer by the enjambment of the first line. To a modern reader, the master and the slave metaphor might sound hyperbolic, akin to the manner in which William Shakespeare deploys the term in his fifty-seventh sonnet to intimate outrageously the asymmetries of affection.

Being your slave, what should I do but tend

Upon the hours and times of your desire?

I have no precious time at all to spend,

Nor services to do, till you require.

Nor dare I chide the world-without-end hour

Whilst I, my sovereign, watch the clock for you.

Nor think the bitterness of absence sour

When you have bid your servant once adieu;

Nor dare I question with my jealous thought

Where you may be, or your affairs suppose,

But like a sad slave stay and think of nought

Save where you are how happy you make those.

So true a fool is love, that in your will,

Though you do anything, he thinks no ill (Vendler 273).

So, hand in hand, the master and slave, go forth as all seems well—that is, until the second line. The verb "go," which means *walk*, is a trope, an element of the composite metaphor that serves to elaborate the depiction of the megametaphor of the master and the slave. Idiomatically, the word *go* in English is remarkably versatile (e.g., even by car, one *goes* shopping), serving as a sometime copula verb (e.g. to ask why someone is no longer here, we ask where they *went*) in the manner of the all-compassing *to be*. Such appropriation of a stative verb is not without precedent: For example, in Hawai‘i Creole English, locally referred to by the misnomer Pidgin, the copula verb is *to stay*, not *to be*, as in, "How you stay?" for "How are you?" (Sakoda and Siegel 59 – 63, 115)

Along with the lexical choice of the verb, its qualification also elaborates and extends the metasonnet's megametaphor. That is, the way in which the master and slave go "hand in hand" is yet another construction that elaborates the conceit. The phrase—composed of a singular, countable common noun, a preposition, and the same noun refrained—works syntactically as an adverb, modifying the verb *go*. The master and the slave go hand in hand: These agents of opposition in relation to one another proceed in concert if not affection. Then, though the comma at the end of the line serves notice that something is coming, perhaps portentous and deserving pause, we learn, through elaboration, that, though going hand in hand, touch is lost between the master and the slave. Robinson's actual words are "[t]hough touch be lost." He might have elected to use the simple present tense form of the copula verb to convey the same, but the poet chose the subjunctive form of the verb, evoking a mythopoetic timelessness like Aboriginal Dreamtime or Edmund Spenser's *Faerie Queene*. The subjunctive is also a lexical cue that the trope is a trope, that the master and the slave are not solely representative of their denotative meanings of opposition but, in fact, instruct the reader to expect the extensions and elaborations of the metaphorical conceit to continue. Like "go" or "hand in hand," the words "touch" and "lost" are also instances of figurative speech that elaborate the megametaphor: In addition to physical contact, "touch" suggests a degree of intimacy or familiarity that, in Martin Buber's dialogical concept of I-Thou, is "lost" to the pedestrian ubiquity of I-It, the empty pathos of the material world. The words "touch" and "lost" are an unusual collocation. They appear in concert more naturally when, for example, one bemoans no longer being able to do something that once came easily as, when one says of writer's block, "I've lost the (magic) touch I once had in writing verse." Note the presence of the definite article in this usage. More idiomatically, the words collocate to indicate a break in communication: "We've lost touch with one another over the years." Taken together, in light of the chasm wrought by the enjambment, the first sentence alone

demonstrates how poetic expression emerges from the interplay of the composite metaphor's duplexity while being simultaneously complexified by the lesser, though instrumental, metaphors built into the figurative and idiomatic definitions of the poet's lexical choices. Bear in mind that we are just two lines into the poem: Robinson's verse has cast the reader of this sonnet, *in medias res*, into the metaphorical deep end.

The second sentence comprises the final three poetic feet of line two, where the line enjambs (unencumbered by any marks of punctuation), into line three, where it enjambs again (though this time given warning by the comma that, as at the end of the first line, something is syntagmatically will follow [or, to coopt the terms laid down by Lakoff and Turner, that some word or phrase will follow to further extend and elaborate the trope] is just around the lineated corner, so to speak) (Lakoff and Turner 67). The sentence, concluding through the whole of line four concludes with a full stop: "The poet is a slave, / And there be kings do sorrowfully crave / The joyance that a scullion may command." As before, our reading of the sentence, to employ good naturalization, will look to the workings of verse alongside the otherwise prosaic nature of words and their grammar. This seems an accurate paraphrasing of the poem's second sentence: "The poet is a slave, and there are kings who (do) sorrowfully crave the joyance that a scullion may command." Robinson begins the second sentence by breaking the readerly fourth wall, revealing the bond between tenor of the poet and the vehicle of the slave with the lucid equation of the copula verb: A = B. With its comma at the end of line two, the enjambment allows the reader to be momentarily bewildered as to what line three will bring. Will the thread of the poet-as-slave trope be continued, wonders the reader, through extension or otherwise altered through semantic elaboration? No, something new, the opposite side, so to speak, of Dante Gabriel Rossetti's metaphorical coin in Charon's hand: We turn our attention now to the other half of the duplexity that encompasses the poem's megametaphor, that of the king—a trope of

unknowing, one yet to be given the semantic key as slave, a moment before, had been. What, wonders the reader again, is king to the poet's slave? Drawing on a familiarity with the canon of lyrical verse (and sonnets in particular)—think Dante's Beatrice, Petrarch's Laura, Shakespeare's young man, and Milton's late espoused saint—the reader surmises that perhaps the Muse, whatever her incarnation, is king to the poet's servility.

The second independent clause of the second sentence—that which begins with "and there be kings"—serves further notice that poetic artifice in Robinson's metasonnet is substantive, not decorative, a cue as clear as Hayes' was in reversing the stanzaic order, as if to say that, to understand this poem's thoughts on the art of the sonnet, pay attention to the lessons of its making. The second sentence of the poem is comprised of two independent clauses that, since they are conjoined, invite comparison. Both clauses could serve as sentences, but Robinson heightens the effect of the duplexity (while simultaneously putting the onus of interpretation squarely on the shoulders of the reader) with a comma and a coordinating conjunction, as in: This, this, this, *and* that, that, that. The first clause begins with Robinson revealing one of the tenors of the megametaphor's duplexity: "The poet is a slave"—subject, copula verb (*to be*), and object. The second clause, though possessing more lexical garnish, has a like construction: "And there be kings do sorrowfully crave / The joyance that a scullion may command"—subject, copula verb (*to be*), object. Yet, even as the reader notes the parallel structure at work in both clauses, the differences between the two are thrown into greater relief. Whereas the first clause uses the simple present tense of the copula verb (*to be*), the second uses the subjunctive form—this contrast renders the first clause a model of modern clarity and reveals the second to be the very sort of baroque, Victorian prattle, as noted in the last chapter, that Pound and Eliot so vociferously rallied against. While the first clause begins with the subject, the second uses the word *there* as an expletive, which creates a passive construction that delays the true subject until after the verb.

Robinson might have written, for instance, "and kings (do) sorrowfully crave" but concluded that the poem demanded otherwise. At the end of the second sentence, the reader is only aware of half of the megametaphor: If the poet is a slave, what is then the master? The second clause of the sentence brandishes lexical markers that pay homage to yesteryear's instances of the poetic—the mythopoetic timelessness of the subjunctive, *do* as an emphatic marker (used to this day to help poetasters make a line scan or otherwise reach the metrical finish line to a desired rhyme), and, especially, the rare lexicon (*joyance*, *scullion*, and the curious modal construction of *may command*).

The second half of the octave is comprised of the third sentence of the poem, which further elaborates the reigning composite metaphor of the sonnet. Beginning with a coordinating conjunction and a fascinating interjection, Robinson manages to rhetorically torque the master and the slave relationship, now revealed as a metapoetic trope, with knowingness and foreboding:

> But, ah, the sonnet-slave must understand
> The mission of his bondage, or the grave
> May clasp his bones, or ever he shall save
> The perfect word that is the poet's wand (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25).

The interjection of *ah*—offset by commas to give the knowingness its due and, thereby, make the anticipation of the pause more pregnant—is deft. In one fell swoop, Robinson endows the poem with an immediacy of fraternity, for we, as readers, are included in the aside, the keep-this-to-yourself-ness of what is about to come, which makes the ornateness of the second clause of the second sentence now appear for what it is, an exercise in artifice, whose disingenuousness is confirmed by the lucid expression in the first clause of the sentence.

Robinson continues: “But, ah, the sonnet-slave must understand / The mission of his bondage”. This is the third iteration of the word *slave* in five lines, though, here, Robinson has created a compound neologism that does something else. We learn what the tenor of the other half of the megametaphor’s duplexity is: The sonnet itself, whose echoes from the title now enable us to perceive the conceptualization of this lyrical expression as a kind of metapoetic key to the poetics of the form. In this sentence, the modal verb has evolved from *may* to *must*, and the stakes are delineated in terms nothing less than grave. Whereas the first line’s adverbial *hand in hand* lent an air of fraternity to the relationship between the master and the slave, we now see that clasp in a more existential light. The now-revealed tenors of sonnet and poet, couched as master and slave, have been extended and elaborated through diction and the lineation, both of which we will now consider.

Beginning with line five of the poem, where the third sentence begins, the megametaphor’s duplexity is manifested in Robinson’s coinage of the hyphenated compound, *sonnet-slave*; this is the subject of the sentence. The verb phrase *must understand*, in addition to its denotative meaning (*must comprehend* or *must perceive*), hints at the servile stance of the poet in relation to the immortal form of the sonnet—the poet must stand under its master, so to speak, and, in doing so, be mindfully cognizant of “the mission of his bondage”. Though a modicum of freedom is suggested through the echo of the phonological refrain embedded in the word *manumission* (that is, official freedom from the bondage of slavery), Robinson, coyly, does not reveal what the sonnet-slave must understand, saying only that failing to do so is fatal. The first enjambment, at line five, indicates that the sonnet-slave must understand, well, everything—but, after the turn, the reader learns that what is vital is the poet’s clarity with which the relationship to the form is understood. In this, we hear the echoes of Hegel’s aforementioned passage in *The Phenomenology of Sprit* about the consciousness of the slave. The enjambment at line six momentarily leads the reader to think

that *the grave* is perhaps an adjective used as a collective noun (e.g., the poor or the rich) to reference grave or serious matters—but, no, after the turn, it is indeed found to be a singular countable noun serving as a metonymy (with *the grave* representing *death* or *mortality*), one in which, through lineation, we, as readers, literally fall into: *memento mori*. The image of the clasping of bones evokes John Donne's "The Relic" ("[a] bracelet of bright bone") and John Keats' well-known, posthumous fragment ("[t]his living hand, now warm and capable") (Donne 55; Keats 384). It also evokes the compulsion of attending to the grave as expressed in the octave of "Amaryllis," one of E. A. Robinson's own sonnets:

> Once, when I wandered in the woods alone,
> An old man tottered up to me and said,
> "Come, friend, and see the grave that I have made
> For Amaryllis." There was in the tone
> Of his complaint such quaver and such moan
> That I took pity on him and obeyed,
> And long stood looking where his hands had laid
> An ancient woman, shrunk to skin and bone (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 4).

Tracing the evolution of the modal verbs affords understanding of the evolution of the relationship between the master and the slave: *must understand* leads to *may clasp*, which leads to *shall save*—ranging from directive to warning to dire warning, for worse than death is the poet's failure to find the right word.

The final noun phrase of the octave—*the poet's wand*—presents the reader with an unexpected extension of the megametaphor of the master and slave (as sonnet and poet, respectively). This unexpectedness is confirmed as noteworthy by the fact that the word

wand, the only imperfect rhyme, highlights the poet's ability, even within the bondage of his mission, to exercise lexical empowerment. The wand, thanks to its materiality as well as its being a source of creative power, certainly brings to mind a pen, especially since this is the wand of a poet. But the introduction of the realm of magic following the life-and-death stakes of the metaphor as delineated so far seems somehow curious. Did Robinson's sensibilities fail him here with a mixed metaphor that is not quite capable of stretching to the points of effective extension and elaboration with the inclusion of magic and its levity, almost comedy, of affect? The reader, mulling such thoughts at the volta—that is, the grand poetic turn that comes at the end of line eight in a Petrarchan sonnet—cannot be so sure just yet. But, then, the sestet follows, the fourth and final sentence of the poem.

> The sonnet is a crown, whereof the rhymes
> Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones;
> But shapes and echoes that are never done
> Will haunt the workship, as regret sometimes
> Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones
> The crash of battles that are never won (Robinson, Sonnets, Crosby 25).

For me, as a reader, the sestet, pun intended, is the crowning glory of this sonnet. It is also one of my favorite passages in Robinson's oeuvre (which, peering into my copy of his *Collected Poems*, published four years after the poet's death in 1935, amounts to some 1,488 pages of verse). What I admire about this sentence is, in equal measure, its finesse with syntax (against an ornate backdrop of rhyme) and the high-risk aesthetic stakes Robinson was willing to bet in pulling it off. This claim for the two-fold achievement of the stanza requires a close reading. To see how this sestet is able to poetically convey and structurally embody

the sort of gravitas at work in Robert Frost's dark sonnet, "Design," we will first need to vivisect its syntax in order to know what is being said; only then can its sentences be anatomized. I confess that, for me, part of the allure—the decades-long allure—of this poem lay in the mystery of how I apprehended the sestet's meaning-of-life-cum-*ars-poetica* by intuiting what it strove to say rather than, as a better reader might do, work toward comprehending what it was actually saying. Put another way, even as E. A. Robinson obfuscates the text through poetic artifice, this foregrounds the stanza's subtext, whose color and tone are, then, furthered amplified by poetic artifice. Two elements of this redoubling effect of poetic artifice are through the sestet's inversions of syntax (i.e., word order) and its dazzlement of rhyme. (A reading of the poem's phonological complexity, including its theory of rhyme, will come in a future chapter, "Entanglements of Prosody".) Alongside these important effects of deforming the text against the formal properties of the sonnet's second half, two impressive enjambments, at lines eleven and thirteen, heighten the affective sensibility—that is, the color and tone just mentioned—of the sestet. To aid our reading, the actual text of the sestet appears again below, this time followed by what I trust Veronica Forrest-Thomson would see as an instance of good naturalization, my attempt to undo the artifice of Robinson's grammatical inversions toward the lucidity of pedestrian prose:

> The sonnet is a crown, whereof the rhymes
> Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones;
> But shapes and echoes that are never done
> Will haunt the workship, as regret sometimes
> Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones
> The crash of battles that are never won.

> The sonnet is a crown, where the rhymes are the
> jewel-stones for the purest gold of thought; but
> shapes and echoes that are never done will haunt
> the workship as regret sometimes will bring the
> crash of battles that are never won to sad thrones
> with human yearning.

Even in such a clarified state, the sentence still commands an air of magic from the waving of the wand at the volta. Looking to both the actual sestet and this paraphrase, there is a neat divide at the end of line ten where the semicolon appears, making this sestet, like the two stanzas of the Petrarchan sonnet itself, a duplexity and an asymmetrical one at that. Lines nine and ten form a grammatical sentence, comprised of an independent clause ("The sonnet is a crown") and a dependent clause ("whereof the rhymes / Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones"). Lines eleven through fourteen make up the second *de facto* sentence, which, as the first, is comprised of an independent clause ("But shapes and echoes that are never done / Will haunt the workship") and a rather contorted dependent clause ("as regret sometimes / Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones / The crash of battles that are never won").

Let us review the first half of the sentence, which falls on lines nine and ten of the poem, ending with, as mentioned, a semicolon serving as a syntactic stop: "The sonnet is a crown, whereof the rhymes / Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones". In the second part of this study, we will look to ascertain the claim that, as Harvey Gross and Robert MacDowell stake in their *Sounds of Modern American Poetry*, E. A. Robinson was both a poet of the phrase and a master—"*the* master," as they state verbatim and even italicize—"of the American sonnet" (Gross and MacDowell 59). But, for now, as Helen Vendler once mined Shakespeare's orthography for clues as to how to read the poems, we will mine the semiotics

of Robinson's instrumental metaphor in the sestet in our attempt here (Vendler 148). The crown, a metonymy for regal authority, in the manner of the poem's second sentence, which revealed the tenor of the slave as the poet, now, across the hemispheric schism made by the volta, confirms our notion, though with an obliging nod to ambiguity (though, in the octave, kings are, by apposition, masters), that the master is the sonnet; here, that mastery, as a crown, is rendered in the letter and vowel of the poem's *o*'s: "The s*o*nnet is a cr*o*wn, where*o*f the rhymes / Are f*o*r Th*o*ught's purest g*o*ld the jewel-st*o*nes". Yet, if the sonnet is indeed the crown, or the master, then what are we, as readers, to make, assuming a correspondence between master and king, of the second sentence of the poem: "And there be kings do sorrowfully crave the joyance that a scullion may command." How is the reader to reckon with this affective sentience of the sonnet? What, now that both tenors of the megametaphorical duplexity are known, does Robinson mean by this? By way of answer, a guess must be ventured: Robinson uses two different vehicles—the *master* of the octave (with its mentioning of "kings") and the *crown* of the sestet (with its implicit connotation of kingship)—to describe the sonnet's relations with, respectively, the poet (or slave) and the other lyrical forms (or serfs). Yet, not even the sonnet's vaunted position in the canon of lyrical history can keep it from pining for the joy that comes with artistic freedom, the unshackling, as Keats deems in his own metasonnet, of its fetters. As to the letter *o*, this reading of the written symbol is not far-fetched, as the coming chapter in section two on prosody will argue. Indeed, Robinson created a rhyme scheme that further elaborates and extends the relationship between the twin actors of the megametaphor, [ae] and [ei], both of which share a single written symbol, hand in hand, though touch be lost. As with the second sentence of the poem, which unfurled a royal lexicon amid a tapestry of aristocratic syntax, the formal-sounding inversions here unveil the sestet's style as accomplished satire: Crown though it be, the sonnet's gold and jewels weigh heavily upon its trusted authority.

One of the facets of the sestet that make this piece of writing so effective as a counter-discourse to the octave is the way that Robinson uses the associative properties of prepositional phrases along with the shrewd deployment of a single verb (*bring*) to, in tandem, though discretely, collocate with the prepositions (*to* and *with*) of those selfsame phrases. These, together with the syntactic inversions and the dazzlement of rhyme (which, as suggested a moment ago, also illustrates the subtext between the master and the slave, a point that, as promised, will be explored soon), allow the reader to feel the very discombobulation of composing in poetic form that Robinson, as the poet, is himself reckoning with self-reflexively in the second grammatical sentence (comprising the last four lines of the poem). The never-ending shapes and echoes that resound without resolution are replicated in the mind of the reader who struggles to delineate what the sonnet is trying to say about the sonnet; hence, my earlier confession of reading with more intuition and less examination. The effect of this compositional device hearkens back to the ekphrastic metaphor that began this study, that of Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms*. As Marc keeps the tension at the moment just before symmetry is broken, a moment of action in stasis as described in Keats' "Ode on Grecian Urn," E. A. Robinson's creation of tethered prepositional phrases that share a verb but collocate with equal strength of idiomaticity has the effect of allowing different possible readings at once. In re-reading the lines, take especial note of the word order following the comma once the dependent clause begins. Each phrase of the dependent clause has an enjambment-like effect on the emergence of semantic meaning. That the prepositional phrases are both able to be moved around in this inversion yet remain bound to one another evokes, of course, the megametaphor itself—the syntax of the sonnet's conclusion not only metapoetically describes what the reader is experiencing (and perhaps what the poet is, too) vis-à-vis shapes and echoes that are never done, it also replicates the master and slave relationship as described at the outset of this chapter, for the words are both adjacent to one

another—hand in hand, if you will—and exhibiting their own meanings independently, as if either Hegelian self-consciousness were emergent or touch were sententially lost.

> But shapes and echoes that are never done
> Will haunt the workship, as regret sometimes
> Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones
> The crash of battles that are never won (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25).

The subject of the dependent clause is "regret," and the simple future transitive verb is "will bring"—yet, curiously, for there are no punctuation cues to otherwise guide the reader and funnel the rhetorical stream of the poem to the object of the clause, which is the noun phrase (that occupies a line unto itself) "the crash of battles that are never won". The future modal "will," redoubled, is echoed from the start of line eleven to the start of line twelve, conjuring up the modals that marked the evolution of the relationship of the metaphorical master and slave—*must*, *may*, and *shall*. Why, wonders the reader at this point, does Robinson seem to deliberately design ambiguity and rhetorical obfuscation in the sestet: What poetic purpose does it serve? It's a fair question to ask because Robinson was renowned for his slow and fastidiously meticulous approach to craft (as an oft-told anecdote will shortly confirm). To me, the conclusion of the inconclusive crashing is itself a powerful and modern message for the poet to leave with the reader—though the poem metes out the sonnet contract of octave and sestet with due rhymes, an expectation of closure is not met. This is assuredly by design. As Michael Longley's decision to return to an earlier point (in the story of Achilles and Priam at the closing couplet to heighten the impact of its titular ceasefire), so does Robinson. Thereby, ambiguity reigns: The shapes of the syntactic structures of the prepositional phrases echo one another and the polysemy of the final words

of the poem “never won” can be heard as “never one” remind us of Matthew Arnold’s “Dover Beach” or James Joyce’s poem that begins “I hear an army charging upon the land.” In other words, there is a polyphony at work in the writing of this sonnet, which embodies yet another duplexity for the reader to ponder—the plainspokenness of the slave’s poetics as measured against the gilded, bejeweled crowning glory of the lyrical tradition (as perceived by the likes of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound).

At the beginning of this study, I mentioned that Robinson himself created two versions of this poem. The only operative difference between them was a lone vowel, which changed the meaning of a single, though significant, word, especially given that this is a metasonnet, a formal poem about poetic form—and those words are “workshop” and “workship”. Both evoke the idea, which elaborates the manual labor of the slave in the metaphor (even if such work is a handicraft, it demands, as a goldsmith’s does, the skill accrued over a lifetime of practice), that a sonnet is both a thing (such as a material crown) and an ideal (as in the symbol of the crown). Unless Robinson uncharacteristically revealed the rationale for this nuanced change, say, in a letter (most of those that survived and have been collected have not been published because of the poet’s indecipherably minuscule scrawl), we will never learn why he made the change to the word from the original “workshop” in 1896 and then revised the word to “workship” in 1927 before (assuming the final change was Robinson’s and not the publisher’s) to return to the original “workshop” in the editions of his *Collected Poems* published the 1930s after his volumes of selected sonnets were published in 1928. I am inclined to think that the practical issue of the publisher’s printing plates is the reason why “workshop” won out in the end (rather than some second-guessing about the word), but I have not found any textual basis for this assessment, save an anecdote about Robinson’s workaday practice of revision. During his summers spent at the MacDowell Colony, E. A. Robinson, whose fame brought unwanted attention, was often met

by novice writers seeking to impress or otherwise engage the shy poet, who wanted nothing more than to eat and return to his quarters.

> It was a different young writer, a bouncing lady novelist, who made a daily practice of joining E. A.'s table at dinner, beaming at him, and announcing her achievement of the day—never less than five thousand words. Finally, following one of the silences her proclamations always caused, E. A. creased his brow in his scowl of excruciating precision, pursed his lips and said "This morning I deleted the hyphen from 'hell-hound' and made it one word; this afternoon I redivided it and restored the hyphen" (Hall, *Anecdotes* 150 –151).

In summing up the metaphor that lies at the heart of Robinson' metasonnet, perhaps the most important note to strike is the one that has been continuously sounding: The composite metaphor of the master and the slave as representing the sonnet and the poet is a study in contrasts—the style of the sentences and word choices they embody are at odds; this of the simple slave versus that of the ornate master. The two are aligned at the beginning of the poem, even familiar, but the touch—the magic touch demanded of the perfect wand—is lost. In the second sentence, we learn that the poet is the tenor for the vehicle of the slave; we learn, too, that the master—or king, rather—pines for the joys of a poet. That state of affairs notwithstanding, Robinson reminds the reader that the joy, whatever its cause, may be unfounded, for the work of the poet is grave, for the art wrestles with issues of life and death, issues so weighty that the poet may be too blocked to write anything at all, wasting his powers, a sentiment that Milton, too, expressed by way of a sonnet. The volta's void cleanses our palate for the six-line sentence to come, this one revealing the tenor of the other half of the metaphor's duplexity, and we learn that the crown is a sonnet. We also learn something of its workship—or workshop—through the tropes of gemologist and goldsmith as well as the

allusion to poetry's powers of illusion via imitation. And, finally, we are reminded that the course of the poem is a manifold reminder of courses not taken by the poem. The contortions of Robinson's syntax in the extraordinary poetics of the sestet allude to an impasse, which, in its way, alludes to the canon both before Robinson and after him. The master and the slave sounding their crash of battles that are never won forge the way for Longley's duplexity of the unequal relations between the Greek victor and Trojan loser (which, in turn, afford Hayes' relations between gym and crow) and a discussion of even greater fighting forms, whose echoes irrepressibly echo those of the master and slave.

In the second chapter of this study, which explored the poetics of the sonnet, Paul Oppenheimer made the claim that the dialectic at the heart of the form (alongside the innovation of private reading over public recitation) was instrumental in the invention of self-consciousness or, as Harold Bloom also claimed of Shakespeare's art, the invention of the human. As to what that self-consciousness might actually be, we would do well, again at some length, to return to Hegel:

> Self-consciousness is and *for itself* while and as a result of its being in and for itself for an other; i.e., it is only as a recognized being. The concept of its unity in its doubling, of infinity realizing itself in self-consciousness, is that of a multi-sided and multi-meaning intertwining, such that, on the one hand, the moments with this intertwining must be strictly kept apart from each other, and on the other hand, distinguished, or they must be always taken and cognized in their opposed meanings. This two-fold sense of what is distinguished lies in the essence of self-consciousness, which is to be infinitely or immediately the opposite of the determinates in which it is

> posited. The elaboration of the concept of this spiritual unity in its doubling presents us with the movement of *recognizing* (Hegel 108 – 109).

This is an apt place to close our discussion of the essential features of duplexity that lay at the heart of this reading of Robinson's metasonnetry. Hegel neatly foreshadows what is to come next, which will look to the way these poetic duplexities are dynamically experienced, not least as synesthesia, in the reading of poetry: The second part of this study consists of four chapters that will include a musical interlude, an analysis Robinson's prosody, an exploration of Juri Lotman's concept of explosion, and, finally, a reading of E. A. Robinson's metasonnet against its canonical antecedents.

Dynamics: *The Poem of Ecstasy*

> On powerful wings
>
> It speeds
>
> Into realms of new discovery
>
> Of Ecstasy (Bowers 133, II).

Presciently, the lyrical sentence of the epigraph, a translation from Alexander Scriabin's accompanying text to his symphonic *Poem of Ecstasy*, delineates where this dissertative poetics of ecstasy has been, where it is now, and where it is headed. In the first line, the aquiline forms of Franz Marc's *Kämpfende Formen* seemed addressed, not least in how, with powerful wings at work, they rush headlong into one another—an apt depiction of duplexity, which is the concern of the first part of this tripartite study. The second line of Scriabin's here—"(i)t speeds"—neatly fits into the workings of how duplexity leads to, through a dynamic process of what Estonian literary theorist Juri Lotman called *explosion* (Lotman, *Culture* 7). The referent for the epigraph's pronoun, in this bespoke exegesis, is poetic experience itself. As French semiologist Roland Barthes writes in *Image, Music, Text*, "(T)he Text is experienced only in an activity of production" (Barthes 157). Reading, the active production of textual meaning, is experiential. In this sense, the speeding of Scriabin's verse evokes dynamics, specifically the means by which duplexities of poetic artifice create emergent forms that ensure every reading of a poem is singular. This—the dynamics—will be the stage of the process by which a reader experiences poetic ecstasy as covered here in the second section of the study. As for those "realms of discovery," the encounters resulting from these emergent forms speaks to the third section, which, as dialogue, owes its theoretical underpinnings to the philosophies of Martin Buber and Mikhail Bakhtin. And the final line of

verse comprising the sentence delivers what the prior three had sought, namely, the onset of ecstasy.

As to what, exactly, ecstasy means in this poetic sense demands discussion—but, as its apprehension can be best had inductively (for its definition is as contingent on connotation as much as denotation), it is in our interests to table the question for the moment, adding that, like its general meaning, ecstasy of the poetic variety is a state of lyrical bliss experienced by the reader and one wrought be the effects of poetic artifice. More precisely, the thesis of this study is that poetic artifice, as a complex and synesthetic continuum experienced by the reader, creates dyads of artifice, which are referred to here as duplexities. In turn, these dyads—in the manner of how mixing colors results in new hues or how the playing of simultaneous notes results in a chord—create novel forms born of complexity, emergence, and networks. Because the reading of a poem is, as Barthes says, "an activity of production," this interanimation between the colors or notes is dynamic or, to use Lotman's term, explosive. The second section of the study will look to how poetic artifice, once coupled, dynamically expresses itself. The third section of the study will take a deeper or broader view, sounding questions of dialogic philosophy and syntopical reading, which, too, will inevitably fall back to the groundwork of duplexity and dynamics as laid out in the first two sections of the dissertation. Pulling back the curtain just a bit affords an anecdote that might hasten and sharpen the focus of what is meant here by poetic ecstasy and why such a term is both deserving of exploration and, at the same time, so difficult to express. As my own growth as a reader of poetry has evolved over the many years since I first read E. A. Robinson's metasonnet, my approach to writing a dissertation on a reading of the poem has also evolved. For instance, as Dr. Johnson once sought to put a straitjacket on the mutability of the English language through the enterprise of his dictionary, I genuinely—with a naivete that I am deeply embarrassed by now—thought that I might be able to, in the aspirational

spirit of, say, a variorum edition of Chaucer's General Prologue to *The Canterbury Tales* or Wayne Booth's annotated edition of Shakespeare's *Sonnets*, assemble, through a bifurcated approach addressing both literary history and applied linguistics, and write a complete and total reading of the poem, a two-hundred-page footnote, if you will, for both layman and scholar.

This, of course, was foolhardy. I spent years reading widely and deeply from Aristotle to Chomsky, from Jakobson to Vendler, to say nothing of the untold sonnets alongside sonnet anthologies and sonnet primers. When I was invited to give a fifteen-minute presentation (via Zoom) at a sonnet conference at Johns Hopkins University during the COVID-19 pandemic, I was so mired in the process—the thick throes of the never-ending, Ouroboros-like, closed-circuit loop of secondary literature, all of it, at some point so promising that my talk consisted of a recounting of the education my reading had borne out, capped by this still unanswerable question: Given the superabundance of poetic artifice in a sonnet, of which Robinson's metasonnet may stand in as representative, how ought one read, let alone teach, such a poem? During the talk, I recalled Annie Dillard's observation from *The Writing Life*: "To write so much as a sonnet, you need a warehouse" (Dillard 46). Amen to that. Then, at some point, following the conference, I began to wax introspectively and reflected upon another course to plumb what I was doing as a reader: With these veritable libraries buried somewhere in my head, I entertained a notion to make sense of this simple yet all-too-complex thing called a sonnet. And this change of approach, this engagement of the literary work tête-à-tête, focuses squarely upon the reader, the poem, and the tonnage of phantom baggage that both bring to the dialogue. This approach, if idiosyncratic, had the virtue of authenticity and accessible data. I re-read both Smith's and Kaufmann's translations of Martin Buber's *I and Thou* along with critical appreciations of the book, eventually finding my way to Buber's early collection of translations of religious experience, *Ecstatic Confessions*, which, its singular adjective

notwithstanding, reveals a great catalogue of ecstatic manifestations in all their diversity. I thought of how the artifice of Robinson's worked on me, how, through the coarseness of language alone, I was able to not only access a host of synesthetic experiences but even design them—their phonology, their semantics, their syntax—in concert with the conventions of received forms of verse, such as enjambment and allusion, which complexified and even personalized the resulting poem to the n^{th} degree. At this, the question reasserted itself: Given all this, how could anyone read, let alone teach someone else to read, even something as both minuscule and vast as a sonnet?

This question evokes James Joyce's claim that, as *Finnegans Wake* took seventeen years to write, it should take the same amount of time to read it (Carey). In 1897, shortly after his first book was published, E. A. Robinson confided in a letter that a sonnet generally took some fifty hours to write, the result of Edisonian inspiration and perspiration, but the metasonnet was particularly challenging: "The first draught comes easily, then comes the struggle. I wish you could have seen me growing lean over 'The Master and the Slave'" (Cary 45). Even so, the vagaries of poetic artifice, given their complexities and idiosyncratic ways of engaging readers, strongly suggest that, while vital points of background and foundation can assist a reader in acquiring the necessary skills to achieve a degree of poetic literacy, a more elegant theory must be drawn to account for how poetry works its magic. Here's a case in point: For me, the poetic artifice of the sonnets of Gerard Manley Hopkins (as the verse of Andrew Marvell did for the late Donald Hall) regularly incite states of poetic ecstasy. Delving not long ago into the second edition of Reuven Tsur's mammoth *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics* and reading its twentieth chapter, "The Divergent Passage and Ecstatic Poetry" (which itself was inspired by Edward Douglas Snyder's *Hypnotic Poetry: A Study of Trance-inducing Technique in Certain Poems and its Literary Significance*, published in 1930) confirmed—through an analysis by the French critic Henri Peyre of a

sonnet by Charles Baudelaire that concludes that the poem's artifice is designed to effect a "rapture of ecstasy" (Reuven 504)—my own independent arrival to the same conclusion that, even if the neuro-scientific or linguistic apparatuses are not in place to do much else but stake a claim, the thesis of the present study has been identified by sensitive and informed readers like Snyder and Reuven as having merit. By sheer dint of my years spent reading the poem, E. A. Robinson's sonnet on the sonnet was the right vessel for this critical voyage to a newfound land. Ecstasy, then, became the by-word, and, in short order, the Russian composer Alexander Scriabin's most famous composition, *The Poem of Ecstasy*, fell within my ken. I read what I could find online about the piece, eventually making a trip to the well-regarded classical music section of a department store in downtown Munich to sample CDs and pick one up to take home for further listening. I also ordered two books about the composer—a magisterial biography by Faubian Bowers and a long-form essay by a Greek neuroscientist about the claims made that Scriabin's eccentric approach to musical composition was due to the neurological condition that we now call synesthesia.

Alexander Scriabin (1871 – 1915) remains a singular figure in the storied annals of Russian music. And, of his unique body of work, the composer had this to say about his longest, most complex piece:

> "Never before has there been such music," he said of the Third Symphony. He spoke of its "divine play" as the fundamental of creation, both for creating the world itself and in producing art. He spoke of the essence of art, of religion, of socialism—in a word, of everything.
>
> He said that a fusion of all the arts was essential, but not in the theatrical, Wagnerian sense. Art must combine with philosophy and religion to produce something indivisible (Bowers 50, II).

The Third Symphony, which Scriabin titled "The Divine Poem," is divided into three movements—"Struggles," "Sensual Pleasures," and "Divine Play". The first movement, "Struggles," is a "nervously syncopated" theme, whose *allegro* is "marked 'mysterious and tragic'" (340, I). Philosophically, the composition of "Struggles" unveils, as Scriabin's biographer Faubian Bowers notes, an existential duplexity: "The 'I' states itself in the opening measure. The 'being' dares to assert itself and differentiates itself from a state of 'non-being'" (339, I). When pressed to explicitly interpret the first movement, Scriabin revealed that two entities, which he dubbed "The Man-God" and "the Slave-Man," engage one another, and "their interplay titles the first movement" (340, I). Therein, themes of happiness, intoxication, and liberation are opposed to those of fear, doubt, and depression. Bowers notes that the first movement is self-referential, having its "several themes […] woven in a sonata form within a sonata form" (340, I). The notes sounded at the end of the movement are instructed to be played proudly and triumphantly (340, I).

Titled "Sensual Delights," the second movement was the first—though not the last, as *The Poem of Ecstasy* would later prove—"overtly sexual page of Scriabin's music" (340, I). Indeed, for "the New York performance of 1907, he authorized"—catering to the sensibilities of his American audience—"a translation of that title as 'Ecstasies'" (340, I). The tempo of the movement is slow and induces its enticements through "trilling birds" and the "tremulous steps in sylvan dells" (340, I). In short, the spirit of the piece, reports Bowers, "revels in physical sensation," which "comfort and console man" (340, I). In turn, through these comforts, as Scriabin would later explain, the sublime is accessed "out of the depths of being" (340, I).

In the third and final movement of the Third Symphony, titled "Divine Play," the process of creativity itself is unveiled, whereby, as Scriabin describes its intentions, "[t]he

Spirit is now released from its former ties of submission to a higher force" and "creates," then "its own creative Will" (Bowers 341, I). The allegro alights, and the loftiness of its ascent evokes the resplendence of soulful liberation. Of this, years after its premiere, Scriabin remained enthusiastic enough to italicize the piece's profundity: "This was the first time that I found light in music, the first time I knew intoxication, flight, the *breathlessness* of happiness" (341, I). The first, perhaps, but it was not the last time that the composer would access other senses in the pursuit of his artistic vision. Citing the recollections of former students of Scriabin, Faubian Bowers fleshes out a portrait of the composer as a teacher whose pedagogy, not unexpectedly, reflects his sensibilities toward the art. One student reminisced:

> He worried more than anything else about sound. "You must caress the keyboard. Don't pound it as if you hate it," he would say. He worked indefatigably on tonal shadings. He made us repeat one note forever. He helped us find ways of striking it to get separate colors (293, I).

Others recalled the sagacity of his exhortations:

> "This may seem like a passage to you, but to Mozart it was an idea, a thought." "You must draw sound from wood and steel as a miner extracts precious ore from the dry earth" (293, I).

Taken together, these memories shared by Scriabin's students evoke an aspirational vision of art's possibilities of expression. Envisioning music expressing color and the nuances of philosophy suggests the work of a singular mind, a composer who sees the poetry

of aural art, one expansive and capable, as Scriabin himself noted of his Third Symphony, of "soar[ing] in flight and light" in a manner that "[re]called the activity of creating the world" (Bowers 341, I). In this respect, the artist's talent and capaciousness of mind allows for creativity to exceed the limitations observed and heeded by others evokes the forty-fifth, forty-sixth, and forty-seventh lyrical fragments of Heraclitus, known for his pairing of oppositions that result in spiritual fire:

> 45.
> The mind, to think of the accord
> that strains against itself,
> needs strength, as does the arm
> to string the bow or lyre.
>
> 46.
> From the strain
> of binding opposites
> comes harmony.
>
> 47.
> The harmony past knowing sounds
> more deeply than the known (31).

No work by Alexander Scriabin, perhaps, more ably illustrates these principles of what Gerard Manley Hopkins celebrated as Heraclitan fire than the composer's most celebrated piece of music, *The Poem of Ecstasy*. Originally, the composer intended the work

to be titled, more scintillatingly, *Poème orgiaque*, and the composition was to have become his fourth symphony. Instead, though notably shorter than the Third Symphony, *The Poem of Ecstasy*, as the change of title indicates, sublimated unadulterated desire into Dionysian mystery. To accompany the score, Alexander Scriabin wrote a poem in the spirit of his bespoke design of synesthetic intent. And, in 1906, while working on *The Poem of Ecstasy* in Geneva, Scriabin kept a journal. In one such entry that describes his creative process, his italics here indicate the existential grandeur of his stated wants.

> I *want to know the truth*. And even before this, *I want to live*. I also have *the fact of my consciousness* wherein dwells the world in all its multiplicity of states in which everything is unified (Bowers 103, II).

In another series of entries, Scriabin's observations foreshadow the philosophy of dialogue espoused by Martin Buber and, thereby, tacitly buttress our assertion that duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue enable poetic ecstasy. First, Scriabin writes tellingly of this dialogic nature of consciousness, echoing the duplex premise at the heart of *I and Thou*:

> Every state of consciousness is a relationship to another state of consciousness. This means that its appearance is the negation of all else. In this negation I relate to the other, that is, unconsciously I struggle with the unconscious form of this other abiding in me […] (Bowers 104, II).

Scriabin then continues, uncannily dovetailing the second part of this study on dynamics, observing how the breaking of symmetry directly leads to explosions of artifice, which complexify as new duplexities that will explode again *ad infinitum*, resulting in vibration.

> Each state of consciousness is a determined point in vibrating motion. Vibration is the linkage of a state of consciousness to a single sentence. By appearing to tremble and shake, they give us a scheme of opposites which resolves into vibration (104, II).

Thirdly, Scriabin, continuing in his journal entries that reflect on the work of both the composition as well as the poetic text to complement the music, considers how synthesis resolves the foregoing in a dialogical manner; again, the italicized emphases, here and in the passages that follow, are his.

> The following act of synthesis takes place in my consciousness: I connect one group of states to establish *my personality*; I connect the other to establish my *individuality*; and with a third, I establish the not-I; and with the fourth, I unify the I and the not-I; that is, I join together all my states of consciousness in one world and one *Universe* (104, II).

Scriabin continues the entry in the Geneva notebook, connecting consciousness to godhead and, ultimately, to ecstasy as well.

> God as a state of consciousness is personality appearing as the bearer of higher principle which is nothing and the possibility of all. It is creative power. The history of the universe is the evolution of God, the yearning for Ecstasy (104, II).

Scriabin elaborates on ecstasy, the moment when the godly state of consciousness, creative power, informs the divine in man; he thusly defines ecstasy

> Like a man during the sexual act—at the moment of ecstasy he loses consciousness and his *whole organism* experiences bliss at each of its points. Similarly, God-Man, when he experiences ecstasy, fills the universe with bliss and ignites a fire.
>
> Man-God appears as the bearer of universal consciousness.
>
> If the personality acquires the ability to affect the outside world and can at will change the system of relationships between states at any given moment, then such a personality has seized godlike might. Such a personality returns the universe to its divine organism. This is the attainment of full harmony, the limit of creative urge, ecstasy (105, II).

In a sense, we are still reckoning with the outrageous contemporaneity—nay, futurity—of Alexander Scriabin's genius. Indeed, Scriabin's sensibilities and theoretical constructs as a composer were radical as they were complex, for he departed "from the major-minor context of classical harmony" and "invented something new and unique," "levelling the vertical and horizontal differences between harmony and melody to a single unit of compression" (Triarhou 40). This radical break from Russian traditions of classical music made Scriabin an outlier. By being on the record "that the artist is more important than God and the politicians and bureaucrats are not to be praised," he all but assured the demise

of his fragile legacy (Triarhou 33). But something astonishing happened: His music was listened to and played, garnering converts with each passing year.

> Decades after being a *persona non grata* in the eyes of the Soviet regime, Scriabin became a "mascot" of the cosmonaut programme, fueling the national pride: during the historic 1 h 48 min first manned spaceflight by Yuri Gargarin around the Earth on 12 April 1961, Soviet Radio beamed *Le poème de l'extase* into Gargarin's spacecraft, a fitting choice for an event of such stratospheric heights (37).

As the writing of Faubian Bower's biographical tome indicates, Alexander Scriabin's approach to art, with its now-accepted understanding that ours has always been a multimedia world, has attracted the attention as to its possible neurological basis. Lazaros C. Triahou, following in the inquisitive footsteps of the late Oliver Sacks, was compelled to plumb the question: Is the basis for Scriabin's art the result of a neurological condition or something else? Such questions, of course, ponder the relationship of between creativity and mental health, something that Kay Redfield Jamison explores to an astonishing degree of depth, given what little science knows in this regard, in her pioneering study from 1996, *Touched with Fire: Manic-Depressive Illness and the Artistic Temperament.* For his part, Triarhou begins his long-form essay of the question by emphatically stating how important the creative synthesis between the arts was to the composer: In 1919, the Russian writer Boris de Schloezer, "in his account of the life of Alexander Nikolaevich, noted: 'To Scriabin the ultimate reality was Omni-art, of which music is only a component part!'" (Triarhou 101):

> Scriabin sought his formative spirituality in a fantastic synthesis of the arts, interlaced with colours, poetic elements, perfumes, voluptuous flower scents, even tactile association (caresses) between audience and performers. "The creator, exerting his influence on the listeners, supposing the action is musical in nature, is reciprocally influenced by them" (de Schloezer)." (Triarhou 97)

Whether or not Alexander Scriabin experienced synesthesia in the neurological sense as understood by present-day medicine, there is every reason to believe that he experienced a dialogical synthesis through art that, as composer, he sought to write into experiential performances. Even among those who do not experience synesthesia from birth, two other neurological processes—mirroring neurons between artist and aesthete and hyper-binding that brings vision and hearing together—could well be aiding the dialogic exchange between orchestra and audience, an effect that combining the arts would complexify to the n^{th} degree. "Mirror neurons of musicians," writes Triarhou, "combine auditory and visual (action observation) systems and may instigate a bidirectional interaction between players and audiences" (97 – 98). As musicians read music and follow the conductor (and cues of fellow musicians), they feel and communicate emotions through the composition's performance to the members of the audience—but those in attendance may well be reciprocally communicating, through their own affective states, an emotively laden interpretation that is received by the musicians themselves, leading to a dynamic process that accounts for why "each performance of the same piece is different and unique" (Triarhou 97 – 98). As for so-called hyper-binding, the idea is this: Whether neurological or aesthetic, multi-sensory and multimodal input to the brain occurs in roughly the same place, anatomically speaking—namely, the left inferior parietal cortex—which, then, accounts for the aesthetic blurring of the sensory lines.

Lazaros C. Triarhou expounds on a more pertinent point than those evoked by questions of whether Scriabin experienced genuine synesthesia or what Triarhou refers to as "synaesthetics" (and what most writers of Scriabin's time called, thereby compounding the confusion, "synesthesia"), for both have similar effects on the brain of the person experiencing—that is, either producing or consuming—art. Late in the book-length essay, Triarhou poses this question: "Can the arts and the humanities substantially contribute to the study of the human brain?" (100) By way of answer, the author offers this:

> There is a common characteristic, independent of learning or culture, to all and peculiar to no one; that characteristic lies in a simple neurobiological fact, that whenever an individual experiences beauty, regardless of whether the source is visual, musical, moral or mathematical, there is a correlate in the form of metabolic activity in an anatomical component of the emotional brain, namely field A1 of the medial orbitofrontal cortex (Zeki, 2014). The medial orbitofrontal cortex and the adjacent cingulate cortex respond to various sources of pleasure, including music (Ishizu and Zeki, 2011) and even architectural space (Vartanian et al, 2013)."

Alexander Scriabin's Third Symphony, "The Divine Poem," Op. 43, as noted earlier, uncannily illustrates the tripartite set of principles that this study outlines as necessary for a state of poetic ecstasy to take place in the mind of the reader of poetry: Synesthetic elements of artifice, especially of vision and resonance (to co-opt John Hollander's formulation), form duplexities; the elements within the duplexity, at the experience of art, dynamically break symmetry and explode into new, emergent forms; the forms resulting from the explosion themselves form dyads and dynamically break symmetry *ad infinitum*—the dialogic

experience of this continuum, set in motion by the tandem activation of the poet's art and the reader's interpretation of it, is, as a superabundance of synesthetic artifice complexified, both strange (as an instance of another's language) and familiar (as one's own response to this strangeness); the total effect of which results in a state of poetic ecstasy. As I listened to Scriabin's "Divine Poem," mulling such thoughts, the CD of the performance by the Moscow Symphony Orchestra, conducted by Igor Golovschin and recorded in September 1995 in Moscow's Mosfilm Studio, which was produced as Naxos, DDD, 8.553582, the symphony, at the conclusion of its third and final movement, following the briefest of pauses, continued, flowing into Op. 54, *Le Poème de l'extase* (or *The Poem of Ecstasy*) (Scriabin). That work lasted a full twenty-four minutes, comprising a third of the CD's running time of some seventy-six minutes. The ethereal quality of the last track, following the symphony's three movements—*Luttes* (or Struggles), *Voluptés* (Sensual Pleasures), and the previously mentioned *Jeu divin* (or Divine Play) felt otherworldly, almost as though perceived by some sixth sense, one independent of the dueling strengths of hearing and sight (colored by scent, touch, and taste), as if newly grown antennae had sprouted from my head for the sole purpose of detecting soulfulness as opposed to light or sound (Bowers, I 339 – 341). I was frankly dumbfounded, though not unpleasantly; it was, for lack of another word, post-coital: Somehow, the music had led me to a place where I felt outside myself—which, come to it, is the very etymology of *ecstasy*. Giuseppe Mazzotta, in his sensitive reading of a canzone by Petrarch, references this as *torpor lethargi*, "the condition that accompanies the rapture that […] traditionally […] follows the *excessus* of the mind" (178). At once, the rationale of the Soviet space program's administrators to beam Scriabin's *Poem of Ecstasy* into Gargarin's capsule became readily apparent. Such is the hypnotic effect of a state of poetic ecstasy, an afterglow that follows overwhelming artifice that has redoubled, exploded, and spoken to

one's soulfulness through the bespoke immediacy and apprehension of art experienced, leaving one, through the transcendence of sublimity, otherwise.

While the concepts of duplexity and dialogue are sufficiently understood as familiarities, the notion of dynamics in this process of how poetic artifice is able to go from a twosome to infinity evokes conception, where, following fertilization, egg and sperm, like the big bang itself, together unleash a cellular explosion. The moment of magic—when symmetry breaks, as the idiom in quantum mechanics goes—is cogently expressed in the *bindu*, the moment of cosmic conception in the Hindu tradition of metaphysics. Recall our ekphrastic consideration of Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms*, whose figures are represented clearly enough to be identified as eagles in flight, ostensibly on the verge of engaging in combat. As noted in the first chapter of this study, the viewer of Marc's painting is made privy to the moment before the moment—that is, just prior to when, as might be said were these figurations were meant to represent something other than animals, symmetry breaks. Letting our minds' eyes continue past that moment of truth, we see eagles lock talons, mid-air, with their falling and the resulting centrifugal force of their tumbling, they spin downward in a dizzying spiral. It is a deadly game of chicken, as it were, for the loser, presumably before both come fatally crashing to the ground, will, admitting defeat, let go. Interestingly, this same behavior occurs not only between male eagles competing for territory but also between prospective mating pairs. The same head-on flight, the same talon-gripping, the same fall-and-tumble allow eagles to test the mettle and chemistry between partners. I note this now because this interpretation of the notion of duplexity in poetic artifice, this recasting of Marc's *Fighting Forms* as *Loving Forms*, more effectively illustrates the role of dynamics in fostering poetic artifice in this second section of the study.

In this newfound light, which complements Alexander Scriabin's artistic concerns with both synesthesia and (what he euphemistically referred to as) ecstasy, the chapters that

follow—"Entanglements of Rhyme," "Explosions of Synesthesia," and "Emergences of Metapoetics"—the ideation at hand of eagles' mating rites adds an appropriate degree of chargedness to this literary notion of the dynamics of duplexity toward dialogue. In the next chapter, "Entanglements of Rhyme," what is often thought of as a telltale commonplace of verse will be explored in how the interactions between linked sounds and their attending words create a shadow text that runs parallel to the text proper. As noted in "Literacies of Style," the tradition of reading verse in this way has been largely lost over the past century in the history detailed by Timothy Steele's account of the modern ascendancy of free verse. From *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets* by Helen Vendler, pedagogical suggestions on how to teach the skills attending her sensitive and informed approach to reading poetic artifice will draw from the wellsprings of linguistics, philology, and literary history in the penultimate chapter to this study. In the third chapter of this section of the study, "Explosions of Synesthesia," the cultural concept of explosion as formulated by Juri Lotman in his final book will introduce and contextualize one reader's experience of the synesthesia triggered by the poetic artifice of E. A. Robinson's metasonnet, a detailed account delineating its dynamic duplexities against the philosophical touchstones of emergence and complexity. As noted earlier in this chapter, every reading of a poem is unique; every re-reading of a poem is singular. Therefore, this reading of Lotmanian explosion, too, will be of its own—but, as such, my hope is that, as an inductive investigation, its merits will prove of some value for the present reader and generate interest for future enquires. And, finally, in the fourth and final chapter of this second section of the dissertation, "Emergence of Metapoetics," will broaden the heretofore microscopic lens significantly as we focus our sites on allusive artifice and canonical questions while reading the influential predecessors to Robinson's modern metasonnetry—namely, Wordsworth, Keats, and, especially, Rossetti—as well as taking stock of an extraordinary anthology of (mostly) American metasonnets published in the 1890s, the

same decade as Robinson's. From this point, we will then, from the lofty perch of Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, be well-positioned, reflexively, to take stock of all what has forgone, offer the aforementioned notes toward a new pedagogy for teachers of poetry. But, now it's time to turn to rhyme, whose interplay has much to say.

> Where, like a pillow on a bed
> A Pregnant banke swel'd up to rest
> The violets reclining head,
> Sat we two, one anothers best (Donne 46).

Even as its imagery hearkens back to our consideration of Ezra Pound's "In a Station of the Metro," John Donne's figurations here from "The Ecstasy" foreshadow our exploration of rhyme in E. A. Robinson's metasonnet's megametaphor, complementing the lyrical sagacity of Martin Heidegger's interlocutor in "A Dialogue on Language between a Japanese and an Inquirer," the first of three essays in *On the Way to Language*: "In our ancient Japanese poetry, an unknown poet sings of the intermingling scent of cherry blossom and plum blossom on the same branch" (Heidegger 53). This is really as good as it gets when striving to define the many-splendored manifestations of rhyme. Shortly, we will look to definitions offered by four American poets—Robert Beum, Karl Shapiro, Babette Deutsch, and Edward Hirsch. After which, having acquired a sense of rhyme's essence and functions, we will turn to an article by Simon Jarvis, "Why Rhyme Pleases," which presents an unvarnished account of how rhyme is perceived and practiced by contemporary poets. Serving as a kind of coda, Jarvis' piece updates the narrative unveiled by Timothy Steele's *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt against Meter.* Then, using architectural metaphors posed by Martin Heidegger and Donald Hall, we will sketch the metaphysical interiority of rhyme. Roman Jakobson and Linda Waugh follow with a vital reminder of the universality and entrenchment of rhyme in our collective psyches. And, returning to Jarvis and Hall, we will conclude our preface by looking to chains of meaning found in patterns of

sound, a technique used by Helen Vendler in *The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, which reveals a subtextual, semantic shadow to Robinson's megametaphor of the master and the slave. At which point, through a graphic representation in the International Phonetic Alphabet, we will delineate the course of Robinson's rhymes, line by line, insofar as they shed light on the poem's all-important trope of fighting forms. Finally, we will conclude this chapter by reprising the unexpected dialogue between Heidegger and Hall, whose thoughts on rhyme and sensibilities of song afford a bridge to the next chapter on how the synesthesia—or, more precisely, syn-aesthetics—of artifice in a poem explode, in the Lotmanian sense, effecting a state of readerly ecstasy. But, let's not get ahead of ourselves and circle back to the overarching questions on our readerly minds: What is rhyme, and how does it inform the reading of a poem (like Robinson's metasonnet)?

"Rhyme," write Karl Shapiro and Robert Beum in *A Prosody Handbook*, "is agreement in sound between words or syllables" (86). The *Oxford Dictionary of English Grammar* offers a more linguistically exact yet equally cogent definition: In the field of phonology, what we think of as rhyme is referred to as a minimal pair—that is, two words differing "only in respect of one meaningful sound contrast" (Chalker and Weiner 240). *The Routledge Linguistics Encyclopedia* reminds us that such minimal pairs have historically played an instrumental role in the pedagogy of second-language acquisition, neatly dovetailing observations cited by Jakobson and Waugh on the importance of rhyme in how children learn to speak (*Routledge* 150). Shapiro and Beum—whose prosody was first published by Harper & Row in 1965, thirty years after Robinson's death and a time, as Steele notes, when the ascendancy of free verse was manifest—feel compelled to add this note for the edification of the general reader, which, today, as Steele and Jarvis have elaborated in their accounts, amounts to a throwing down of the gauntlet: "English poetry is overwhelmingly a poetry of rhyme" (86).

For Shapiro and Beum, rhyme is an inclusive term, comprising full rhyme (e.g., *slack* / *flack*), slant rhyme (e.g., *slack* / *flick*), alliteration (e.g., *slack* / *slip*), and assonance (e.g., *slack* / *wrap*). These four categories will serve our needs in the project of examining how a reading of rhyme enriches the semantic and syntactic meanings of the dynamic duplexity of Robinson's metasonnet's reigning trope of the master and the slave. Published in 1957, Babette Deutsch's *Poetry Handbook: A Dictionary of Terms* compounds these four categories by considering how stress and location (within the line) qualify a given rhyme. For Shapiro and Beum, the word pairing, irrespective of lineation, is paramount, but Deutsch elaborates with effective examples drawn from the history of English poetry and is implicitly more inclusive with regards to the qualities of sounds being paired: For her, rhyme is "the repetition of the same or similar sounds, whether vowels, consonants, or a combination of these in one or more syllables, usually stressed and occurring at determined and recognizable intervals" (116). Deutsch, in her introduction to the long entry for the term, helpfully notes that the shared etymology of *rhyme* and *rhythm* reminds us of the interanimations of these two elements of poetics, for they inextricably leave a reflexive impression on the reader's experience of one another. For example, Deutsch notes that internal rhymes (also called leonine rhymes), those that occur within a line, emphasize one another prosodically and, thereby, influence the line's metricality (117). She also notes a device known as identical rhyme, which, in the case of a poem like Robinson's metasonnet, as in the repetition of the word *slave*—amounting to both an identical and leonine rhyme—serves the poetics of the poem through semantic variation and sonic refrain, the very marks that enrich the structuring of verse. Published in 2017, Edward Hirsch's *Essential Poet's Glossary*, at the outset of its own entry defining the term, cites three esteemed poets who see rhyme as a muse-like divining rod:

> Rainer Maria Rilke called rhyme "a goddess of secret and ancient coincidences." He said that "she comes as happiness comes, hands filled with an achievement that is already in flower." Rhyme has the joyousness of discovery, of hidden relations uncovered as if by accident. Rhyme occurs, Joseph Brodsky said, "when two things sound the same but their meanings diverge." It creates a partnership between words, lines of poetry, feelings, ideas. Gerard Manley Hopkins called rhyming words "rhyme fellows" and declared, "All beauty may by metaphor be called rhyme" (256).

As to the workings of that beauty-making metaphor, Jonathan Culler in his *Theory of Lyric*, published in 2017, invokes, through translation, Hegel's *Aesthetics*: "Rhyme thus brings new emphasis both to the difference of material form of the two rhyme words and to the difference of meaning that separates them" (Culler 96). The means by which rhyme does this have been identified by Shapiro and Beum as numbering eight: First, rhyme, through a twofold path of comparison and contrast, focuses readerly attention on the relationship of a pair of words, their sounds and semantics (Shapiro and Beum 96 – 97). Second, rhyme infuses a musical quality to poetry, heightening the reader's pleasure of the text by synesthetically engaging what John Hollander refers to as both vision and resonance (97 – 100). Third, a rhyme scheme creates a sonically-tiered, semantic structure that can be read as subtextual echoes, acting as a kind of harmony or shadow poem (100). Fourth, rhyme is emphatic, akin to refrain or repetition, in underscoring a point or, in light of the duplexities formed by the components of rhyme, points that the poet means to make (101 – 102). Fifth, as Rilke suggested, rhyme serves the poem—or, more precisely, the poet—heuristically, for rhymes, at their best, not only say the unsayable but tether the un-tetherable; they also forge, for the poet as well as the reader, paths that the more pedestrian conventions of collocated

prose is blind to—acting, in short, as muse. And this heuristic function of rhyme—the means by which it enables genuine discoveries in the creative work—informs the experience of the reader, who can palpably sense the poet's authenticity of craft (102 – 103). Sixth, as a formal device, rhyme, akin to enjambment, creates, through the habit of pattern, a readerly expectation—an anticipation that abides even as other linguistic complexities are processed in the interim—for the returning echo sounded. The formal device of rhyme also channels expectations through a familiarity of the canon. So, the reader of Robinson's metasonnet, recognizing its species as Petrarchan, has the otherwise usual expectations and anticipations of rhyme further enhanced, thanks to the compounded powers of allusion, resulting in an even greater activation of the coming text (103 – 104). Seventh, rhyme, not least through the formality of form, evokes the storied verse of centuries—that, say, of Milton and Tennyson—and, thereby, enables the reader access to rarefied states of poetic expression such as those in the stately elegies of "Lycidas" and "In Memoriam A. H. H.". As with the judicious use of metrics, rhyme, applied to good effect, nudges the reader, as the listener of a song, toward the ecstatic, the standing outside of the everyday to become imbued in the sacred (104 – 105). And, eighth, rhyme, even more so than rhythm, enhances memory, and testimonials to its powers are legion (105 – 106). By way of anecdote, I can attest this. Once, as an undergraduate at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, due to circumstances of my own doing, I found myself with the unenviable task of having, over the course of a single evening, to memorize the entirety of "Ode to a Nightingale" by John Keats and demonstrate my learning with a recitation before my professor and fellow students the next morning. Thanks in no small part to the mnemonic chimes of its exquisite rhymes, I still know the poem by heart, astonishingly, some three decades later. Identified by Karl Shapiro and Robert Beum in their *Prosody Handbook*, these eight functions of rhyme, diverse and powerful, remind us that

contemporary poets who categorically eschew any application of the technique do so at their peril (96 – 106).

These workings of rhyme can be readily seen in the epigraph to this chapter, which features, again, lines from "The Ecstasy" by John Donne, an inspiration for this study's insight of how the emergent poetics of duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue afford a readerly state of ecstasy.

> Where, like a pillow on a bed
> A Pregnant banke swel'd up to rest
> The violets reclining head,
> Sat we two, one anothers best (Donne 46).

In light of this chapter's theme, our attention is wont to focus on the end-rhymes here—*bed*, *rest*, *head*, *best*—which, certainly anchor the theme to a single vowel (designated by linguists as the open-mid front unrounded vowel), /ɛ/. Yet, generally speaking, the rhymes—in the inclusive sense of the term that includes alliteration and assonance—play an important role in the sonic experience of the sentence as verse. The alliteration of /p/ in *pillow* and *pregnant* connects the vehicle of the metaphor to its tenor. The third line is richly imbued with leonine echoes of assonance—the stressed syllable of *pregnant* begins the line, leading to the the swelling of *swel'd*, a notably outsized syllable melding form and function (while connoting the synonymity of *welled*), before coming to *rest*, which, because of its location in the line and its properties as a ditransitive verb leaves the readerly ear momentarily uncertain as to what will come next, the absence of a full-stop notwithstanding. The final stressed syllable of *violet*, like *pregnant*, is a leonine rhyme that matches the omnipresent vowel of /ɛ/, a near rhyme of the end-rhyme of *head*. So stressed, the final syllable of *violet* shares a near rhyme

with the main verb of the sentence, [*s*]*at*, and is assonantly reverberated in the last word of the five-line sentence, the end-rhyme *best*, which, echoing the consonance of the preterit form, puts the sentence, at last, to rest. Integrating the interlineal assonance of /ɛ/ into our consideration of the rhymes in the foregoing passage by Donne, since all end-rhymes possess the same vowel, seems logical, though analyses of rhyme have historically sidelined their inclusion. "There is one very obvious reason to treat assonance in relation to rhyme," offers Simon Jarvis in his essay "Why Rhyme Pleases," "which is that it can be an important feature in linking rhyme pairs" (Jarvis 443), which is exactly what our review here of Donne reveals. Jarvis' observation alone—whether or not to include assonance in a poem's reading of rhyme—evokes a sensibility that has been largely lost after successive generations of poets have, for political reasons or, perhaps, due to insecurities about their literacies of such devices, stopped using rhyme.

> Whoever selects rhyme as a practicing poet today will find that, first of all, to that repertoire of metacommunicative winks and nods by which a series of poetical part affiliations can be more or less adroitly negotiated: whether your lines begin with upper- or lower-case letters, whether they are metrical or para-metrical or non-metrical, whether they are left-adjusted or complexly indented or migrate everywhere across the page—these devices and the choices they entail, quite certainly constitute in the case of significant poets a tribal palette of tremendous complexity. But today, partly because you can see them without even needing to begin reading the poem, they are more immediately a kind of rough badge or uniform, very rapidly legible to friend or foe, who, as it were, already knows all about you even before you have

> begun to open your mouth. Their metacommunicative hyper-saturation threatens altogether to blot out their prosaic coloration (435).

Simon Jarvis, in the stylistic torrent with which he expresses this, is certainly of a mind about such poetic shorthand and the deleteriousness it has had, and continues to have, on the greater creative possibilities of the art. In an earlier chapter, "Literacies of Style," we found convincing the conclusion that Timothy Steele reaches in *Missing Measures*, to which T. S. Eliot unwittingly concurs in his essay "The Music of Poetry," that present-day poets are now a few generations into a world devoid of verse, which, through their own writing and teaching, will assure that this remains the case. As contemporary poets read mostly other contemporary poets, occasionally reading modern poets who have fashionably limited their craft to free verse, the literacy of verse—that is, the knowledge of how to read it along with the practice of how to write it—has been largely lost. This is a serious matter, as was noted earlier, not least because poetry presents, as we will see in this chapter on the literacy of rhyme, a novel way of interpreting both text and subtext. Indeed, poetic literacy, by definition, is nuanced and puts a premium on reading in ways different than prose, as Jarvis suggests in this passage on the reading of rhyme:

> Both the metricization and logicization of rhyme, of course, are in one way impeccably motivated. Without its metricization, we should, it is feared, be unable to distinguish rhyme from sonic replays occurring any old where in lines; without its logicization we should not see how rhyme is a form of thinking and not merely a species of sensation (440).

Jarvis concludes this reckoning of rhyme by addressing its naysayers' politics as misguided, saying, in effect, that they have thrown the baby out with the bathwater: "We have

been taught to distinguish rhyme which does the imagination's work from another kind of rhyme which offers 'the tinkling and jingling of evasions.' But Pope, the verse-junkie, also offers us, if you like, the tinklings and jinglings of imagination" (447).

Rhyme achieves this twofold path of embodied thinking through appropriation of sound as mind, which, as Heidegger, using an architectural metaphor, sees as the key to its success of its saying: "Language has been called 'the house of Being.' It is the keeper of being present, in that its coming to light remains entrusted to the appropriating show of Saying. Language is the house of Being because language, as Saying, is the mode of Appropriation" (Heidegger 135). But, if language, as a house of being, makes capable the sayable, poetry's singular gift to the structure, argues Donald Hall, is a secret room within that house that is capable of saying the unsayable precisely because of its inscrutability, its inability to be perfectly delineated or, to use Veronica Forrest-Thomson's term, naturalized:

> The unsayable builds a secret room, in the best poems, which shows in excess of feeling over paraphrase. This room is not a Hidden Meaning, to be paraphrased by the intellect; it conceals itself from reasonable explanation. The secret room is something to acknowledge, accept, and honor in a silence of assent; the secret room is where the unsayable gathers, and it is poetry's greatness (Hall, *Breakfast* 4).

Though Hall is not referring to rhyme alone here, the passage is salient, for rhyme attends to the unsayable in this very way, which, as Jarvis concludes, is the same way that Pope's tinkling and jingling enrich his art with expression and embody his thought with eloquence.

Hall's passage also evokes the argument of Forrest-Thomson's *Poetic Artifice*, making the case that poetry cannot be paraphrased, for its poetics of artifice empower and amplify its complex rhetoric.

In the tradition of Hawaiian poetry, this secret room that Hall speaks of is called *kaona*, a well-concealed reference that need not be ever found ("Kaona"). Just as rhyme is more than the sum of mere consonance of sound, so is *kaona* more than the aggregate of its secrecy. The poetics of Hawaiian composition regard *kaona*, like rhyme, as a device for poets as much as their audiences. The poet embeds the referent in the making of rhyme as an artist builds human anatomy onto the sketch of a stick man. In this manner, the goal is less to identify the underlying superstructure so much as it is to marvel at and, thereby, savor the inspired craft it has wrought. Such embedded devices as *kaona* and rhyme bend the soul inward, allowing for an abiding refraction that dwells in the reader's mind in a deeper way than prose affords. This is because poetry is decidedly not talk. Rather, it is, as Donald Hall exhorts, "talk altered into art, speech slowed down and attended to, words arranged for the reader who contracts to read them for their own whole heft of noises and associations" (Hall, *Breakfast* 5). Just as the cooing and babble of infants precedes their acquisition of diction and syntax, poetry's power to communicate runs deeper than mere words and grammar. The argument that rhyme is pleasurable, a joy echoed from the play of childhood, is formulated here insightfully by Roman Jakobson and Linda Waugh in *The Sound Shape of Language*:

> The universal existence of poetry and demand for poetry find a powerful corroboration in the studies of children's language. In his renowned book *From Two to Five*, the Russian writer Kornej Cukovskij (1882 – 1969), one of the most experienced specialists in child language, conclusively defended the thesis of the infant's parallel acquisition of language and penetration into

> poetic rudiments and claimed that "any rhyme gives a child particular joy" and that "rhyme-making at two years of age is a regular stage of our linguistic development. Those children who don't go through such linguistic exercises are abnormal or sick" (Jakobson and Waugh 217).

Experience with children confirms the universality of this developmental stage, as do the perennially bestselling books by Dr. Seuss and Shel Silverstein, where the joyful play of rhyme that came in learning how to speak is brought forth again as children learn to read. Does this state of joy in rhyme abide in adults? The works of dynamic duplexity looked at earlier by Franz Marc and Alexander Scriabin suggest so. Citing the essay "One Relation of Rhyme to Reason" by the literary scholar W. B. Wimsatt, Simon Jarvis offers this expression of the heuristic argument for rhyme tendered earlier by the poets Karl Shapiro and Robert Beum:

> In literary art only the wedding of the alogical with the logical gives the former aesthetic value. The words of a rhyme, with their curious harmony of sound and distinction of sense, are an amalgam of the sensory and the logical, or an arrest and precipitation of the logical in sensory form; they are the icon in which the idea is caught (Jarvis 441).

To be sure, Jarvis is on to something, though even this radical notion is conservatively framed, for poetry, through its fighting forms of dynamic duplexity that delve into dialogue, goes even farther. "Poems tell stories; poems recount ideas; but poems *embody* feeling. Because emotion is illogical—in logic opposites cannot both be true—the poem exists to say the unsayable" (Hall, *Breakfast* 4). Indeed, it does. Now, using an interlinear transcription

into the International Phonetic Alphabet, which will allow us to peer into the workings of the sound structure of the metasonnet, let us plumb the embodiment of Robinson's rhymes.

The master and the slave go hand in hand,
ðə ˈmæstər ənd ðə sleɪv ɡoʊ hænd ɪn hænd

Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave,
ðoʊ tʌʧ bi lɔst ðə ˈpoʊət əz ə sleɪv

And there be kings do sorrowfully crave
ənd ðɛr bi kɪŋz dʊ ˈsɑroʊfəli kreɪv

The joyance that a scullion may command.
ðə ˈʤɔɪɛns ðət ə ˈskʌljən meɪ kəˈmænd

but, ah, the sonnet-slave must understand
bʌt, ɑ, ðə ˈsɑnɪt sleɪv məst ˌʌndərˈstænd

The mission of his bondage, or the grave
ðə ˈmɪʃən əv ɪz ˈbɑndɪʤ ɔr ðə ɡreɪv

May clasp his bones, or ever he shall save
meɪ klæsp ɪz boʊnz, ɔr ˈɛvər hi ʃəl seɪv

The perfect word that is the poet's wand.
ðə ˈpɜrˌfɪkt wɜrd ðət əz ðə ˈpoʊəts wɑnd

The sonnet is a crown, whereof the rhymes
ðə ˈsɑnɪt əz ə kraʊn ˈwɛrəv ðə raɪmz

Are for Thought's purest gold the jewel-stones;
ɑr fər θɔts ˈpjʊrəst ɡoʊld ðə ˈʤuəl-stoʊnz

But shapes and echoes that are never done
bət ʃeɪps ənd ˈɛkoʊz ðət ər ˈnɛvər dʌn

Will haunt the workship, as regret sometimes
wɪl hɔnt ðə ˈwɜrkʃɪp əz rəˈɡrɛt səmˈtaɪmz

Will bring with human yearning to sad thrones
wɪl brɪŋ wɪð ˈhjumən ˈjɜrnɪŋ tə sæd θroʊnz

The crash of battles that are never won.
ðə kræʃ əv ˈbætəlz ðət ər ˈnɛvər wʌn

Perhaps the most obvious yet nevertheless extraordinary thing to say about the rhymes of E. A. Robinson's metasonnet is how perfectly they align with the poem's megametaphor, the fighting forms of the master and the slave. The preponderance of assonance, to say nothing of the end-rhymes that echo the vowels of the words themselves—/æ/ of *master* and /eɪ/ of *slave*—is uncanny. Of course, as we learned in an earlier chapter, "Appositions of Metaphor," the master is the metaphorical vehicle for the tenor of the sonnet while the slave is that of the sonneteer. Is such a reading valid? Do the vowels of the two words forming the duplexity of the key trope of the poem reveal such a degree of forethought in design? Indeed, they do—and we know that this is so because Robinson himself tells us. In another sonnet, written at the same time as that which is now under discussion, E. A. Robinson, in an octave-long sentence, reminds us that the poet who would indeed ply such craft to rhyme is rare:

> Oh for a poet—for a beacon bright
> To rift this changeless glimmer of dead gray;
> To spirit back the Muses, long astray,
> And flush Parnassus with a newer light;
> To put these little sonnet-men to flight
> Who fashion, in a shrewd mechanic way,
> Songs without souls, that flicker for a day,
> To vanish in irrevocable night (Robinson, *Collected* 93).

Robinson reminds us of what Hall elsewhere admonishes, that metrics and rhymes are not enough to turn verse into art, for these tools, in the limited hands of poetasters, result in the trite work of "these little sonnet-men" (93). Anyone, says Hall, "can arrange one hundred and

forty syllables so that the even syllables are louder than the odd ones, and every tenth syllable rhymes" (Hall, *Breakfast* 33). Such metronomic chiming—such tinkling and jingling of evasions—are, in part, what compelled Eliot and Pound to rally so vociferously against the workings of form in the first place. No, intones Donald Hall, "only when you have forgotten the requirements of meter do you begin to write poetry in it" (34):

> The satisfying resolutions in a sonnet are more subtle than rhyme and meter, and less predictable. The body of sound grows in resolutions like assonance and alliteration, and in near-misses of both; or in the alternations, the going-away and coming-back, of fast and slow, long and short, high and low (34).

In other words, to read the metrics and rhyme of a sonnet effectively, the reader would do well, advises Hall, to look to its fighting forms—and so we will. Let us begin with a catalogue of assonance for both halves of the metasonnet's megametaphor, the master and the slave, beginning with the former. Consisting of two syllables that comprise a trochee, the word *master*, in the stressed syllable, features the near open front unrounded vowel, /æ/. In my idiolect, the following words from the sonnet possess the same vowel: in line one, *master*, *and*, *hand*, *hand*; in line three, *and*; in line four, *that, command*; in line five, *understand*; in line seven, *clasp*; and, in light eight, Robinson employs a slant rhyme with *wand*. The single syllable of *slave*, by virtue of its length and richness in color, brings to bear the reader's attentive ear, not least for its diphthong, /eɪ/. Again, in my idiolect, the words in the poem where the diphthong is refrained are: in line one, *slave*; in line two, *slave*; in line three, *crave*; in line four, *may*; in line five, *sonnet-slave*; in line six, *grave*; in line seven, *may*, *save*. Interestingly, the diphthong only appears once in the sestet with *shapes* in line eleven.

The Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets by Helen Vendler is the inspiration for this approach to reading Robinson's rhyme scheme. In a close reading of the phonetic and graphic patterns of each sonnet's prosody, Vendler speaks of thematic chains of meaning—that is, the rhymes of Shakespeare's sonnets are thematically linked to create a subtext that runs sonically parallel to the text of the poem. For example, in her reading of Sonnet 26, Vendler detects the foregrounding of the theme of wit not only in terms of the language overtly stated in the poem but also in the chains of meaning evoked through phonetic and orthographical refrain. Vendler, in reproducing the text in italics, places the words that form this chain of meaning in bold (Vendler 146, 164):

> *[The] wr**it**ten [letter will serve] to **wit**ness duty not show my **wit**,*
>
> *Duty so great, which **wit** so poor as mine*
>
> *May make seem bare, in wanting words to show **it**,*
>
> *But that . . . [thy conceit] will bestow **it** . . .*
>
> *[Till my star] points on me graciously **wit**h fair aspect . . .*
>
> *To show me worthy of thy s**weet** respect* (148).

In a like way, this reading of the reigning metaphor of duplexity that Robinson constructs also looks to chains of meaning invoked by the graphic and sonic properties of thematic diction. The poem, of course, begins by recounting the once-close relationship between the sonnet (represented by the master) and the sonneteer (represented by the slave), underscoring the newfound distance between the two with the enjambment of the first line: "The master and the slave go hand in hand, / Though touch be lost" (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Macmillan 25). The words of the twofold trope, both *master* and *slave*, share an operative grapheme, namely *a*.

(Discounting the final vowel of *e* seems valid—in the case of *master*, the *e in er* is ubiquitously bland, and the *e* of *slave*, silent, serving a diacritical role, is even more so.) The written letter, *a*, represents, then, divergent sounds—both (in my idiolectal variety of North American English, which differs markedly from Received Pronunciation in the United Kingdom) /æ/ of *master* and (the more consistently pronounced across all varieties of English) /eɪ/ of *slave*. Once, the two sounds of the sign were one: In Middle English, both words shared the letter *a* and the open front unrounded vowel, /ɑ/, followed by a schwa, trochees bound by sound and symbol. But, since the Great Vowel Shift beginning in the fifteenth century, these words, like the metaphorical master and the slave of the poem, have, over time, lost touch and parted ways. This historical parting—the division into discrete vowels—further informs a reading of the poem's chains of meaning.

If this seems somewhat far-fetched, then consider the telltale breadcrumb that Robinson himself left for us in the interjection of the fifth line of the sonnet: "But, ah, the sonnet-slave must understand" (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Macmillan 25). Robinson emphasizes the interjection's importance and, thereby, our need to be further attentive to it by off-setting it in commas. That the interjection might have worked equally well with, say, either "o" or "oh" and without punctuation adds credence to the admonition voiced—"the sonnet-slave must understand the mission of his bondage," whose rhymes cannot help but prick readerly interest (25). Indeed, he must—and the sonnet-slave presently writing sees that the most implacable bondage at work here is not the form of the sonnet, the purported master form to the poet's slave, but the bondage of writing itself, the inviolable pinning of alphabet to spoken word, the adamantine conventions that we must painstakingly learn, the very same that preceded our births and will abide long after our deaths. So as to better understand the pressing mission of our present bondage, let us consider, line by line, another chain of meaning drawn up by the rhyming and assonantal vowels of the metasonnet's megametaphor, /æ/ and /eɪ/. Words with

/æ/ are rendered in bold, and those with /eɪ/ are in italics.

1. **master and** *slave* **hand hand**
2. *slave*
3. **and** *crave*
4. **that** *may* **command**
5. *sonnet-slave* **understand**
6. *grave*
7. *may* **clasp** *save*
8. **wand** [a slant rhyme, where /a/ stands for /æ/]
9.
10.
11. *shapes* **that**
12.
13. **sad**
14. **crash battles that**

The vowel /æ/ of master is, frankly, easier and less effortful to say than the diphthong /eɪ/ of slave; the production of the vowel /æ/, not factoring the role of consonants, is closer to the neutral resting point of the tongue in the mouth, requiring less movement of both tongue and jaw. That the diphthong of *slave* works physically harder than the vowel of *master* seems neatly apt. In the first line of the poem, though the master and the slave are hand in hand in the sentential expression of the line, perceived through the filter of assonance, we note how the master's vowels overwhelm that of the lone slave. This inequity, we see, moreover, is manifest throughout the poem. Taking stock of the number of words possessing the master's vowel and the slave's diphthong, there are fifteen to eight, a ratio of almost two to one. As if

to underscore the disparity at work, no word contains both the vowel and diphthong together. In an approach inspired by John Updike's "Love Sonnet," which is composed of a single line of verse followed by thirteen end-rhymes, a reading of the poem might be constructed, too, of these thematically bifurcated words of assonance and rhyme alone to create yet another chain of meaning.

Master and slave, hand-hand. Slave and crave, that may command sonnet-slave:
Understand grave may clasp; save wand. Shapes and sad crash—battles, that.

With the noted exception of *sonnet-slave*, the /eɪ/ diphthong is comprised only of monosyllabic words, which contrasts notably from the polysyllabic words of /æ/: *master*, *command*, *understand*, and *battles*. The hyphenation of *sonnet-slave* deserves singling out, for Robinson, in the aforementioned other sonnet from 1896, uses, right down to the hyphen, a like compound. (The hyphen's presence cannot help but jigger our memory of the anecdote of Robinson's painstaking day of work at the MacDowell Colony, where, in the course of a morning, he removed the hyphen from the word *hell-hound* and, then, after lunch, put it back again.) Pairing the title-cum-form of the poem with *slave* in this manner (e.g., *-men*) curiously transforms the storied form of Dante, Petrarch, and Shakespeare into a mockery, a neologism of fighting forms. In this way, *sonnet-slave*, which sounds sorrier than *sonnetman*, evokes both the serious poet's gravitas as well as the modern poet's conundrum as identified in the theory of poetry found in Harold Bloom's *Anxiety of Influence*.

The rhymes and assonance of the /æ/ and /eɪ/ duplexity further inform our reading of the sonic subtext of the metasonnet through the prismatic filter of an intermediary word, whose doubling (like those commas off-setting the interjection *ah*), as with the word *slave* in the first and second lines of the poem, at the outset underscores its thematic import—namely,

hand. Via end-rhymes, the idiomatic expression hand in hand, evoking, at once, both fraternal intimacy and penal shackles, leads to the thematically fitting rhymes of *command* and *understand*, imperatives, both, that can be signaled manually. The verbs also complementarily apply to the lesser tenor of the duplexic trope, that of the poet, who, in writing, commands and, in reading, understands. *Command* and *understand* lexically leap over the *grave* to *clasp*, an act that, to the attentive reader, alludes, through the rhyming bridge of *grasp*, to this exquisite fragment by John Keats:

> This living hand, now warm and capable
> Of earnest grasping, would, if it were cold
> And in the icy silence of the tomb,
> So haunt thy days and chill thy dreaming nights
> That thou would wish thine own heart dry of blood
> So in my veins red life might stream again,
> And thou be conscious-calm'd—see here it is—
> I hold it towards you (Keats 384).

Having, for now, dodged the grave, what is clasped saves: the wand—which, we learn, is nothing less than poetic diction itself, the strangeness that Russian Formalists convincingly argue lies the heart of the art. And what does that Faustian instrument then demonically invoke? *Shapes that*, *sad*, are *never done* and, as *battles*, *crash* and are *never won*. Or, in light of our thesis, those battles are, rather, never one. In any case, the final word of the octave, *wand*, and the final word of the sestet, *won*, act as a dynamic duplexity, a coda echoed: The *wand*'s work is *never done*, and it is *never* truly *won*. In such a conclusive manner, the poet is indeed a slave, whose work is marked by hand alone, even as it aspires to eye and ear and

more. That more—the synesthetic grandeur that Alexander Scriabin sought in composing *The Divine Poem* and *The Poem of Ecstasy*—is what distinguishes poetry from prose, their like material construction notwithstanding, for poetic artifice, as Forrest-Thomson's dissertative account reminds us, elevates verse to communicate at subtextual levels that, there is no gainsaying, largely escape our notice. To this, the poet Donald Hall agrees: "Poetry by its bodily, mental, and emotional complexes educates the sensibility, thinking and feeling appropriately melded together" (Hall, *Breakfast* 5). Hall's declaration echoes Simon Jarvis' observation about Pope's rhymes noted earlier, that, in them, music and philosophy are sounded in unison for a totality of effect and affect like no other. Martin Heidegger concurs: "Song is not the opposite of discourse, but rather the most intimate kinship with it; for song, too, is language" (Heidegger 78). In the Saussurean fighting forms of diachronic and synchronic states of language, poetry—harnessing the whole power of a word, including its connotations and phonological echoes—"sings of the mysterious nearness of the far-tarrying world" (89). Heidegger poses a question that nicely bridges this chapter on rhyme with the next on how synesthetic artifice explodes and emerges to effect, through the reading of poetry, a state of ecstasy in the reader. "There arises the possibility that we undergo an experience with language, that we enter into something which bowls us over, that is, transmutes our relation to language. How so?" (107) In a manner of thinking, all sounds are echoes, for they sound what has, in the bell tower of the mind, been already sounded. Such "[u]tterance," ventures Heidegger, "refers to its inwardness, to what pertains to the soul" (35). To access this poetic *kaona*, this secret room of interiority to which Heidegger alludes, we would do well to heed what Mortimer J. Adler once intoned and read for all we are worth, as though reading love letters. Such a reading entails a marked degree of literacy toward embodied feeling. "Reading with care, so that a wholeness of language engages a wholeness of reading body and reading mind," writes Donald Hall in his *Breakfast Served Any Time All*

Day: Essays on Poetry, New and Selected, his book of essays celebrating the syn-aesthetics of verse,

> we absorb poetry not with our eyes only, nor with our ears. We read with our mouths that cherish vowel and consonant; we read with our limbed muscles that enact the dance of the poem's rhythm; we read alert to history and context of words (Hall, *Breakfast* 5).

From the duplexities of *Fighting Forms* by Franz Marc to the dynamics of *The Divine Poem* and *The Poem of Ecstasy* by Alexander Scriabin, this reading of the poetics of E. A. Robinson's metasonnet has covered a fair amount of ground in modelling how duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue work in concert to achieve a readerly state of poetic ecstasy. We began this chapter with an epigraph on the violet's twofold form in "The Ecstasy" by John Donne, which prefigured our reading of rhyme in the exquisite elegance of Heidegger's Japanese interlocutor's observation of the twinned scents evoked by a haiku. To this, we will close in considering this meditative question by Heidegger on rhyme, whose final botanical trope is an invitation for us to plumb the mysteries of poetic ecstasy by broadening the lenses of our dissertative scope to observe the metaphysical workings of complexity and emergence in Robinson's poem: "When the word is called the mouth's flower and its blossom, we hear the sound of language rising like the earth. From whence?" (Heidegger, *On the Way* 101)

Dynamics: Explosions of Synesthesia

> All explosive dynamic processes occur via a dynamically complex dialogue with stablising mechanisms (Lotman, *Culture* 7).

> Because this language itself rests on the metaphysical distinction between the sensuous and the suprasensuous, in that the structure of the language is supported by the basic elements of sound and script on the one hand, and the signification and sense on the other (Heidegger, *On the Way* 15).

Language, intrinsically synesthetic, is from whence poetry arises. Its music is capacious, encompassing the senses and supra-sensuousness of the mind's integrated powers of intuition. To answer the question Heidegger poses at the conclusion of the last chapter, the sound of language is a music that is resoundingly synesthetic, engaging the realms of sight, touch, smell, taste, and the polyphonic concoction of the mind's ears; it is, in other words, music beyond music. As Heidegger notes "[t]he sound of language, its earthiness is held with the harmony that attunes the regions of the world's structure, playing them in chorus" (Heidegger, *On the Way* 101). This is a sentiment that we might imagine Scriabin expressing—a worldview that is the composite experience of synesthetic song, which we call, for want of another word, poetry. Literary synesthesia, to use Reuven Tsur's terminology, complexifies poetry, which itself, through the conventions of poetic artifice, is language complexified, itself already complexly synesthetic. This personal experience of poetic artifice by the reader is what assures that every reading of a poem is unique. Though Reuven Tsur references another sonnet ("Correspondences" by Charles Baudelaire,

translated by Henry Peyre) in his magisterial study, *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*, what is said of Baudelaire here applies in equal measure to Robinson's metasonnet:

> Here I want to recall that synesthesia, in general, is deemed to be a regression to a less differentiated mode of perception (i.e., to a stage when the mind does not differentiate between the stimulia registered by the various senses). This is of special significance in a sonnet such as the present one, the "essence" of which is said to lie in indistinct, "mystical" intuitions (Tsur 503).

Let us return to another facet of the question that fuels this study's spirit of inquiry: Given that "[p]oetry is a complexly constructed meaning" (Lotman, *Analysis* 35), how is the reader to reckon with such a superabundance of poetic artifice and linguistic information? Drawing on the example set forth by John Gardner in *On Becoming a Novelist*, I will offer a representative description of the experience and thought that one instance of my own close reading of Robinson's metasonnet in response to the poem's synesthesia produced by these complexities wrought by language and poetics. Looking to anatomize his own writing process in light of the notion that poetry and fiction ought to create a vivid and continuous dreamscape in the mind of the reader, Gardner offers up a short poem about flowers—gentians, to be more specific: The purpose of this reading, he makes clear, is to illustrate how language is decidedly not "a recalcitrant and passive medium"; rather—with, in the throes of composition, word informing word and phrase informing phrase—"language plays a far more active role in the creative process" (Gardner, *Becoming* 125):

> No doubt it is sometimes true that the writer has an intuition of what it is he wants to say and, after a struggle, finds just the right words to express the meaning he knew was there waiting to be expressed. Just as often—probably more often—language actively drives the writer to meanings he had no idea he would come to (125).

Gardner's point, of course, is one that Noam Chomsky also makes: Though certainty about the workings of lexical semantics remain poorly understood (Chomsky175), language production is creative, drawing on manifold resources of the mind in the complex task of giving voice to thought, words lead to words, and certain words, thanks to syntax and collocation, lead to certain other words. In this manner, language is informed (if not determined) by language—or, put another way, language use, in both speaking and writing, narrows the field of lexical choices in the course of its production. Gardner's exegeses of his poetics say as much, providing privileged insights into a readerly reflection of his writerly work—analyses, if you will, of his muse. As such, Gardner's explanations are able to do the impossible: They expand time in their explications, taking the red-hot, newly-forged composition to an academic degree of delineation. By way of example as to how this works, here are his reflections on the first two lines of a poem ("Lovely, spooky, dark blue Gentian, / Inner walls like speckled snakeskin,") intended for children and inspired by a photograph (Gardner, *Becoming* 126).

> I found a picture of the dark blue gentian and looked at it to see what one might say. The main things I could think of to say, at least in light of this particular photograph, were that the flower was pretty and that it looked ominous, the luminous dark blue of nightmare. My mind stumbled around in

search of a suitably gloomy rhythm and possible words to fit with it and so came up with the first line. Obviously the gloom is slightly tongue-in-cheek (flowers usually aren't good candidates for the truly scary), hence the word choice "lovely," a word one can never take quite as seriously as it would like to be taken, and "spooky," a kid's word that, in a thudding trochaic rhythm, gets drawn out a little, inflated as it would be in a ghost story told orally to kids at camp. It's this same tongue-in-cheek seriousness that made me decide to (use) "Gentian," giving it a faintly old-timely, Romantic quality (the Romantics were nothing if not naively earnest, as some of them, like Blake, at times understood).

Once the first line was down, I looked back at the picture for a clue to the second line (What else can I say?), knowing this line could rhyme or not, though rhythmic possibilities were limited slightly (the line must satisfy the ear as consonant with the line already in existence); and I saw immediately the odd fact reported in the second line, that the throat of the flower has a speckled, waxy sheen like snakeskin—and noticed in the same instant that "snakeskin" rhymes with "gentian," or anyway comes close enough for government work. After a little muddling in search of solemn trochees meaning "throat," I came upon "inner walls" and the line fell into place (126 – 127).

Recounting this at such length seems an indulgence, and, it may well be, for I've known this passage from the time I was a teenager and have found its sensibilities, perhaps even unconsciously, a model to aspire toward in this study. To be sure, there is, arguably, an element of inauthenticity in the analyses Gardner lays out. For example, though he is, of

course, the author and is ostensibly recalling in good faith his thoughts during composition, this is, demonstrably, a reflective reading that justifies an account of a poem. Be that as it may, Gardner's powers of insight into his own creative process here are exemplary. Certainly, Reuven Tsur saw the value of such qualitative research from sources as authoritative as the poets themselves. Tsur, at the outset of his chapter on literary synesthesia in *Toward a Theory of Cognitive Poetics*, observes that literary synesthesia is generally employed by the poet for one of two effects—either toward a comic effect of wit, in the manner of Pope or Byron, or "to some undifferentiated emotional quality, some 'vague, dreamy, or uncanny hallucinatory moods', or some strange, magical experience or heightened mystery" (Tsur 283). In Robinson's metasonnet, the effects of synesthesia seem to be used toward both ends: Though apparently quite sober with its echoes of Hegel's dialectic of the master and the slave (to say nothing of its portrayal of the stakes of sonnetry in terms of life and death), the octave's synesthetic effects must address the modern sonnet reader's expectations squarely, reckoning with anxiety of influence through humor—after all, the sonnet is the master in this megametaphor, and the sonneteer is its slave. The sestet, by contrast, following the volta that began with the noun phrase "The poet's wand" (and the homophones of *wont* and *want*) still ringing in the reader's ears, assumes the mantle of gravitas, not least through the imprimatur of sentence construction, for the inversions here in the poem's lesser half are as artful as they are risky, tasking, as they do, the modern reader's powers of poetic literacy. With its crown, throne, jewels, and battles that are never won, the images evoked by Robinson's metasonnet hearken back to the form's Sicilian court origin some six centuries earlier.

That said, there is a mistiness to the mystical quality that the sestet embodies more wholly than the half-simile elicited by the octave. Reuven Tsur, elsewhere in his study, reminds us of poetry's challenge to reckon with the need for writing of abstractions

alongside the concrete or what John Gardner deemed the vivid and continuous dream, the mechanism by which literary art transforms language into figurations of experience in the reader's mind:

> Poetry is a constant struggle to overcome the tyranny of conceptual language, and convey vague, diffuse qualities with the help of words. One conspicuous technique is to get the reader to imagine some concrete landscape, in which, information is diffuse, not focused, and which, *via* the orientation mechanism, activates the emotional mode of information-processing […]" (Tsur 290).

In other words, yet another duplexity that dynamically presents a dialogic relationship amid the dense thicket of Robinson's metasonnet, one that the attentive reader takes into account, is the pairing off of conceptual language, which embodies diffusion, and the concrete landscape evoked by both the denotative meanings and synesthetic echoes of the poet's lexical choices and sonic designs. Reading poetry with an eye (and ear, tongue, nose, and skin) to the ways that synesthetic experience is achieved through poetic artifice—especially in light of how these means effect or assist a state of poetic ecstasy—requires, how to put it, a delicate sensibility or, at the very least, one that is not otherwise all thumbs. As Reuven Tsur admits in his study's chapter on literary synesthesia, responding to a poem in this matter—being attuned, that is, to the poetic artifice that conjures up synesthesia—demands a critic's intuition. Indeed, it does. It also further demands a poet's insight. And, as I will suggest in the penultimate chapter of this dissertation, "Literacies of Style," the ability to engage both critical intuition and poetic insight are integral to reading dialogically and the creative production of an aesthetic state such as poetic ecstasy. Line by line, then, in a

manner akin to Gardner's reflection, I will describe the synesthetic effect of the poetic artifice of only the first quatrain of E. A. Robinson's metasonnet, which reads:

> The master and the slave go hand in hand,
> Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave,
> And there be kings do sorrowfully crave
> The joyance that a scullion may command (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25).

As I read the first line silently—*The master and the slave go hand in hand,*—I am struck by an eerie feeling of balance in this relationship of asymmetrical power. This feeling then leads me to consider the syntax of the line, and I notice how the transitive verb, *go*, serves as fulcrum to the clause of perfect iambic pentameter. The punctuation at the end mars this feeling somewhat, reminding me immediately of a book by Dean Kostos, my first poetry instructor in New York, *The Sentence That Ends with a Comma*. (It was in attending Kostos' class at the Gotham Writers Workshop in Greenwich Village all those years ago that I first encountered the name of E. A. Robinson.) The clear ambiguity that compels a truly enjambed line is lost as is the readerly sense of closure that comes with an end-stopped line—the comma smacks of hesitation, and, thinking syntactically, I gird myself for a conjunction and another independent clause. Curious as to that initial feeling of balance (despite the imbalance of subject and punctuation), I anatomize the line's parts of speech and see how the two singular nouns are balanced with two definite articles, which suggests something of the slave's agency. Returning to the sense of *go* as a fulcrum, the nouns of subject are met by the refrained nouns of the adverbial phrase, whose idiomatic informality and implicit fraternity adds to that feeling of equality, which brings about the feeling of

balance again. Inescapably, the last three words of the first line of the poem evoke the images and music of the final two sentences of Milton's *Paradise Lost*:

> High in Front advanc't,
> The brandisht Sword of God before them blaz'd
> Fierce as a Comet; which with torrid heat,
> And vapour as the *Libyan* Air adust,
> Began to parch that temperate Clime; whereat
> In either hand the hastning Angel caught
> Our lingring Parents, and to th' Eastern Gate
> Led them direct, and down the Cliff as fast
> To the subjected Plaine; then disappeer'd.
> They looking back, all th' Eastern side beheld
> Of Paradise, so late thir happie seat,
> Wav'd over by that flaming Brand, the Gate
> With dreadful Faces throng'd and fierie Armes:
> Som natural tears they drop'd, but wip'd them soon;
> The World was all before them, where to choose
> Thir place of rest, and Providence thir guide:
> They hand in hand with wandring steps and slow,
> Through *Eden* took thir solitarie way (Milton 448).

In addition to how the adverbial phrase formed of two singular nouns (sans articles) transmutes the concrete into the conceptual, what strikes me in this impossible-to-ignore allusion, one compounded by the echoes of Milton's own famed sonnets, is the relationship

of creator and creation, which, in terms of asymmetries of power, is akin to the master and the slave in Robinson's metasonnet. Here, too, is yet another trope of duplexity and manifestation of its fighting forms—the Angel versus Adam and Eve, where, though grandly eternal as "the crash of battles that are never won" (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25), the outcome of this instance of symmetry breaking is never in doubt.

The comma at the end of the first line ("The master and the slave go hand in hand,") startles me, for it catches my eye and then quickly catches my breath; though the enjambment itself would have been enough to achieve this same effect—the syntactic closure would be, at the sight of the absence of punctuation and its absence of sonic cueing, momentarily discombobulating enough, but the comma at the end of the line for me as reader, serving as a ripple marring the mirror-like surface of the lake or, more ominously, a dangerously telltale rock on the runway from which the poet is set to take off. The usual subtlety of symmetry not yet broken, achieved by the syntactically complete yet sententially incomplete line that enjambment affords in the poem, is one of the synesthetic pleasures—arguably the primary synesthetic pleasure—for the aficionado of verse (Olival-Bartley, "In Praise"). Indeed, the etymology of the word, *verse*, means to turn, as in the wending of the ox-drawn plough, whose furrowed path brings to mind lines of poetry and the manner of their reading (*Shorter OED*, 3519). The pleasure that comes from reading verse is precisely the fulcrum's balance of symmetry, to which the reader imagines the lexical choices and attending music to come, only to be either surprised or gratified, depending on the outcome of what is found. The presence of the comma, frankly, puzzles me, deadening the momentum of the pentameter and its extraordinary assonance, which were addressed in the previous chapter, "Entanglements of Rhyme". Because the second line, in terms of both syntax and punctuation (with a comma appearing after the independent clause), Robinson seems to want to deliberately impede the flow of the verse to slow the reader down, I sense,

precisely so that the enjambment's pause is made more pregnant, thereby heightening the arrival of the dependent clause and its reverberations that recalibrate the sentence and its arc of meaning.

> The master and the slave go hand in hand,
> Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave, (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25)

Though both the first and second lines end with independent clauses concluded by commas, what follows these marks of punctuation syntactically differ, and this, in turn, markedly effects the experience of the poem. The first sentence of the poem begins with an independent clause, which is bifurcated by the comma from the dependent clause that continues after the enjambment on the second line, "[t]hough touch be lost" (25). However, the second sentence, beginning on the second line after the caesura, follows the independent clause, which ends with a comma at line two, and continues, tethered by a coordinating conjunction, with another independent clause occupying the whole of line three, which, contrastively (and, by contemporary conventions, correctly) has no comma, offering a truly enjambed line, which teeters with symmetry, thanks to the ditransitive verb, *crave*, and is followed by the direct object, confirming the transitive tack the poet has wrought. The commas in the first two lines, to me, are visually and aurally jarring: They punctuate—in the percussive sense of the term—the silent chasm between the sentences, widening the caesura between the second and the third foot of line two, which underscores, equitable handholding aside, that the poet is indeed a slave.

As with the symmetry that the first line afforded, a syntactic balance of subject and object upon the fulcrum of the verb *go*, the first independent clause of the second sentence (at the end of the second line), to my readerly eye, works the same way, displaying a neat

dyadic structure of article-noun and article-noun bifurcated (or tethered) by the copula verb. In both instances of this design, my internal ear is affected. In the first instance, the verb, *go*, falls on an unstressed syllable of the fourth iambic foot, which, having the word complement its meaning, forces me along like the unexpected current of a deceptively modest though strongly coursing stream. In the case of the second instance, the verb, *is*, falls on the stressed syllable of the fourth foot of line two, which makes me, silently, tense my jaw as if I were to say the word—*is*—with due prosodic stress. This reminds me of something that the poet Donald Hall remarked on in both his essays and letters: To read poetry well, one must use the whole body; even when one silently reads, the jaw muscles grow tired. To the reader attentive to the nuanced riches of linguistic synesthesia, this evinces that poetry's effects on the body and mind, its storied duality notwithstanding, are one. In this light, the reading of every single word of a poem ushers the experience of synesthesia, for the myriad and arbitrary expressions of orthography (especially in English, with its lexicon rich with borrowings) against the invisibly plastic and sonically sculptural river of its phonological expression is perpetually astounding.

In the previous chapter, the rhyme thread of the end-words in the sestet were discussed at some length as a feature of phonological duplexity that may lead to a novel, bespoke, and arguably meaningful reading of E. A. Robinson's metasonnet. As I have appropriated it, Helen Vendler's technique in *The Art of Shakespeare Sonnets*, whereby orthography, too, using visual cues as expressively as those auditory, I find, has conditioned my reading, rendering it even more hypersensitive to patterns that complement one another. At the start of the second line, the digraph of *ou* is striking: "Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave," (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25). Eleven letters are used to make two syllables—that is, just one iambic foot. This glaringly and blaringly disparate disjunction between the two words—which also both begin with a dental (i.e., [t]) and end with a digraph (i.e., *gh*

and *ch*), for all their visual similarity—is a curious clash of voicing. Though unstressed, the vowel /o/ comes through audibly with "[t]hough," the first word; and, though stressed, the second word, "touch," of course, is comprised of a schwa, the centrally-positioned vowel at the tongue's resting place. All this, in my reading, slows down the line, making "touch" a touch louder and the pause between the first and second iambic feet of the second line all the more pregnant. Moreover, the subjunctive form notwithstanding, the syntactic structure of "touch be lost," right down to the copula verb, neatly echoes, I note, that of the "poet is a slave". The chasm between the first and second sentences of the poem, a stark caesura, is the fulcrum—the negative space, if you will—highlighting the prelude to their breaking of symmetry, a state presently heightened by the similarity of their grammatical expressions. What bridges this audio-visual break, or so it seems to me in reflection, is the *e* of *be* and, replicated on the other side of caesura's divide, the *o* of *lost*, coming together in the digraph of *oe* in *poet*. This brandishing of synesthesia informs the interpretation that the poet is indeed lost, foreshadowing the realization redoubled by the end of the line that the poet is, moreover, a slave.

> The master and the slave go hand in hand,
> Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave,
> And there be kings do sorrowfully crave (25)

The synesthesia that I sense in reading the third line of the first quatrain of Robinson's metasonnet is primarily an admixture of the visual and auditory. Cataloguing these effects in reading a poem is worthwhile because doing so illustrates a point made earlier: As Reuven Tsur observes, literary synesthesia can be either stirringly emotional or, like that of a limerick, unabashedly witty (Tsur 283 – 284). While the overarching tone of

the effects of synesthesia on the sonnet is overwhelmingly of the former, in the third line of the poem, my reading detects something of the latter. Consider the line: “And there be kings do sorrowfully crave” (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25). Not two feet in, I smile. “And there be”—the subjunctive form—smacks of ancient maps warning that “there be dragons” beyond such point. This, in turn, feeds my mind’s ear a guttural idiom of another allusion, the movie pirate’s clichéd inflection, for the lexical choice of *kings*, adding to the historical remove of *master* and *slave*, compounds the direction of this line of thought, itself a neat example of Lotmanian explosion. Reading on, the curious presence of the emphatic *do* furthers this effect, not least for the surprise semantics that bend the conceptual of the subjunctive into something more connotatively concrete in the manner of the more conventionally composed “there are kings (who) do”. In any case, the *do* measurably creates a caesura, and, with it, the independent clause of “[a]nd there be kings” pivots on the fulcrum of *do* with a verb phrase as a syntactic counterweight. And this, then, forces my readerly eye fully on the dyad of the verb phrase itself, *sorrowfully crave*. A duplexity of fighting forms is born of the phonological and semantic clash between these two words as they come together to form a grammatical unit. The circuitously long arc of the adverb, with its exaggerated prosodic stresses, is met by the sustained diphthong and voiced fricative of the verb; poetically framed, the sadness of the former is met by the desire of the latter. The synesthetic effect of sound and meaning at odds present in the singularity of the grammatical unit explode in my readerly mind, dazzling me—a state that feels like a prelude to poetic ecstasy—into a stirring of confusion about the verb that, with the conclusion of the line, results in an incorrect determination about its intransitivity. Indeed, thanks to the breather offered by the enjambment, my mind reels into a visual state, borne by the echoes of the fighting forms of the second half of the third line. At this point, the whole line works upon me, a word train like the rhyme train cited in the previous chapter comes together—*king*,

sorrowfully, *crave*—to conjure an unexpected image. I think of King David and Abishag, recalling a poem that Rilke wrote on the subject of Shunamistism, whereby an old man ostensibly sleeps with (but does not necessarily have sex with) a young woman or girl in an effort to preserve his health and vigor (Rilke 435). Perhaps, the thought flashes before me, the word *crave* invoked *craven*. Whatever the cue, the most striking instance of dynamic duplexity—one whose paradigm shifts in so short a space—is the emotional set of fighting forms played out in line three itself: The comic pirate voice, a figment of auditory creation, is transmogrified into the sight of the ageing, pathetic king in just ten syllables, four of which are taken up by the adverb alone, underscoring the poet's premium borne out by the adverb's plaintive play of words—*sorrow, fully*.

> The master and the slave go hand in hand,
> Though touch be lost. The poet is a slave,
> And there be kings do sorrowfully crave
> The joyance that a scullion may command (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25).

Taking this all in, the enjambed line—"And there be kings do sorrowfully crave"—is completed as my eye returns to the left margin and the final line of the quatrain: "The joyance that a scullion may command" (25). So ends the sentence—and I am astonished to find my sense of taste somehow activated. How ever did the fourth line of the poem come together to achieve this unforeseen effect? I smile again. Even in the throes of reading, the recollection of a passage from Donald Hall's brilliantly idiosyncratic essay from the 1970s, originally titled "Goatfoot, Milktongue, Twinbird: The Psychic Origins of Poetic Form," comes to mind. As reprinted in *Breakfast Served Any Time All Day: Essays in Poetry, New and Selected*, Hall recounts attending a lecture by a linguist that referenced something called

"autistic utterance," a term wherein the poet, substituting the adjective with "artistic," found powerful analogues to the way that the body responds to the synesthetic effects of poetic artifice. In the essay, Hall impressionistically delineates the means by which poetry complexifies language to coax—through Poundian thickening and condensation—what is either ignored outright or rendered inconsequential in prose, speaking to our purposes obliquely: "The satisfying resolutions in a sonnet are more subtle than rhyme and meter, and less predictable" (Hall, *Breakfast* 34). Poetry's effects are sensual; they affect the body and, thereby, access a literacy that almost bypasses what we come to think of as cognition. Meaning, by this means, is evoked through the sensuality of synesthesia. The provocative and almost surreal description that Hall offers of this effect brings to bear the three neologisms of the title—Goatfoot, Milktongue, and Twinbird. Goatfoot references the kinesthetic pleasures of the body that verse sets in motion; Milktongue, the oral pleasures attendant in verse, including those of eating, drinking, and making love; and Twinbird, another word for rhyme.

> The poet writing, and the reader reading, lulled by Goatfoot and Milktongue and Twinbird into the oldest world, become able to think as the infant thinks, with transformation and omnipotence and magic. The form of the poem, because it exists separately from messages, can act as trigger or catalyst or enzyme to activate not messages but types of mental behavior. Coleridge spoke of meter as effecting the willing suspension of disbelief. The three memories of the body are not only meter; and they are powerful magic, not only for the suspension of disbelief. The form of the poem unlocks the mind to old pleasures. Pleasure leaves the mind vulnerable to the content of experience before we have intellectualized the experience and made it

> acceptable to the civilized consciousness. The form allows the mind to encounter uncensored experience but only because the figures in the forest, untouched by messages, have danced and crooned and shaped (40).

The foregoing is all by way of saying that, in line four, the "mouth-pleasure, the muscle-pleasure, the pleasure of match-unmatch" are furthered almost to the point where a critical apparatus, as Hall found in the writing of this trope-powered piece, rightly fails one (39). My eye returns to the last line of the poem's first quatrain:

> The joyance that a scullion may command (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25).

Curiously, in re-reading, I find the direct object of the sentence makes me happy more for what it does than what it means. Through sheer force of accessing the aural-oral nexus of my infantile experience, the word *joyance* gives me pleasure. My lips, though still with silent reading, dance at the outset of reading the word with a palatalized diphthong stressed, long and loud, followed by the whispered syllable formed of a schwa, nasal, and sibilant. The movement of lips, jaws, and tongue are akin to a bite or a kiss—a dance of the mouth that heralds sensual experience and certain pleasure. Reading the word, its obsolescence is manifest—and I find myself touched that the young poet in Maine sought out this morphological remnant even as I admire how it complements the anachronistic nature of the poem's referents—the master and the slave, the king and scullion. Robinson's affectation lexically serves to evoke, for this reader (in this reading), a grander and more universal sort of happiness than the word *joy* might otherwise offer.

Even in coming to this conclusion, I realize that the noun phrase that the line details—"[t]he joyance that a scullion may command"—evokes, rather, a more personal and

idiosyncratic sort of happiness as well (25). The full-stop of the line allows me this moment of reflection, which quickly waxes nostalgic. When I was eighteen, I extemporaneously got a job as a dishwasher at a Swiss restaurant in my hometown of Kailua, O‘ahu. A married couple—Alfred, a Swiss chef, and Barbara, a kama‘aina manager—took a chance on me, for my interview consisted of me walking into the place before opening hours and telling them, simply, that I was the best dishwasher in town and they would be mistaken not to hire me. They did, and I took to the job, which consisted of making salads and filling dessert orders in addition to seeing to the pots and pans, dishes and glassware and utensils. To my surprise, I genuinely loved the work. There was a satisfying rhythm to the evening—its slow start before the diners arrived, its dinner rush where time slipped by, and its mammoth aftermath, which required strength, speed, and a devoted attention to detail, which would bring everything into order as it was at the start of the shift. I remember telling Barbara that I fancied, as a budding writer, one day writing of the occupation’s ethos as akin to the poet’s credo, and I would title the piece “The Fine Art of Dishwashing”. In the afterglow of having read Robinson’s first quatrain of the metasonnet, the memory of those physically taxing yet halcyon evenings in the kitchen came back to me. In the calm of that repose, a recollection of moments that often came toward the end of the shift as I took on the mountain of pots and pans. The hands gloved in yellow rubber, immersed in the hot water, and frantically working no longer seemed mine; self-reflexively, I felt then as though I were standing outside myself.

These thoughts and more came to me in reading just the first four lines of the E. A. Robinson’s metasonnet. As the idiosyncratic nature of the mind’s wandering in response to the text makes clear, this was a singular experience. If I were to read the poem again, my translation of it, to use the nomenclature of Juri Lotman, would vary in response to the same linguistic stimuli, just as other readers of the poem would have their own unique encounters

with the text (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 52 – 53). It bears reiterating that synesthetic effects of language can be found in prose, but, in verse, their roles of poetic artifice are foregrounded; verse, moreover, possesses conventions such as enjambment that heighten the effects that have been described here. A charge that was sometimes levelled against the likes of structuralist critics like Roman Jakobson was that painstaking analyses (of, most famously, a Shakespearean sonnet) were made of minutia that, in the end, were without meaning (Jakobson and Jones 10 – 11, 31 – 32; Rosenblatt 166 – 167). As Donald Hall asserts, pleasure in poetry is meaning enough, as untold nursery rhymes bear witness. Even so, I submit that literacy in this manner of reading a poem, in addition to enhancing the sensual pleasures of its artfulness, allows meanings previously undetected to become known and even legible. In the next chapter, "Emergences of Metapoetics," the effect of the text triggering explosive translations in the mind of the reader will be considered in light of Lotman's late work and John Hollander's observations on metasonnetry. In short, we will now explore how the reading of duplexity and dynamics in a poem reveals the hidden hardware of its synesthetic and, ultimately, ecstatic effects of poetic artifice.

> The antithesis of explosive and gradual processes is located within that relationship. No less essential to this relationship is the opposition between unrepeatable, individual processes (within the framework of cultural history such processes can be considered unique) and recurring processes. The complex and dynamic interlacing of all these tendencies (we are not suggesting that our list is exhaustive) determines the dynamics of a culture (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 222).

Just weeks before the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the esteemed Estonian semiotician Juri Lotman was in Munich as a Humboldt Foundation laureate working on the themes of how gradual and explosive processes dynamically determine culture and the ecosystem of what he called the semiosphere, the world of signs and semantics that informs not only our percipience but the physical world itself (M. Lotman 239). With *perestroika* at its zenith in the Soviet Union and the fraught atmosphere in both Germanies at the time, the unprecedented moment of chaos imbued with hope nurtured Lotman's thinking about the dynamics of culture, which placed a premium on the duplexities and dynamics of poetry in its general theories of culture, chaos, and emergence, especially vis-à-vis the paradox of the interanimations between its attendant parts and apparent whole (239).

At this time in the Bavarian capital during his laureateship, Lotman suffered a massive stroke. While he would eventually learn to read and, to some degree, write again, he dictated most of the work that would comprise his final two books, *Culture and Explosion* and *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture* (241). These books not only have come to represent Lotman's capstone philosophies on the semiotics of poetry and culture, drawing

inspiration of the times to present their workings as the dynamic clash of the gradual and the explosive, they are also written in a style differing notably from Lotman's earlier studies on semiotics and the nature of the poetic text (241). As Mikhail Lotman observes that, compared to his father's structuralist studies, these final two volumes are streamlined—they are more direct in style and less encumbered by the intervention of references (241). Mikhail Lotman adds that these changes of composition and rhetoric mark a fundamental change in Juri Lotman's thinking in this regard, which heretofore had prioritized the language of space over the language of time. Juri Lotman later explained that this sea change resulting in focusing his thought on the "dynamic and asymmetrical nature" of time came during the first hours of his stroke in Munich (241). As the onset of the stroke began, Lotman recalled striving to analyze his mental state, recalling that

> time stopped for him and his whole life experience turned into one panchronic picture. For example, his father played two roles at the same time, appearing both as a young man and as he probably was at the end of his life (JL had not been a witness to that as his father died while fighting in the Second World War). For JL, time disappeared, having been transformed into space. This experience inspired his reflections on the phenomenon of time (242).

It is tantalizing to imagine that, during his Munich sojourn, Juri Lotman had seen and, at some subconscious level, recalled the duplexity of Franz Marc's *Fighting Forms*. This redoubled vision of his father, responsible for the course of thought that would become manifest in both *Culture and Explosion* as well as *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture*, channels the insight that began this study of how duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue evoke

states of poetic ecstasy in the reading of poetry rich with artifice. This final essay of the second section of the study is something of an outlier. Its form, for starters, will make this apparent. Juri Lotman's "The Function of Art," an essay from *The Unpredictable Workings of Culture*, is reproduced here in its entirety but punctuated, paragraph by paragraph, with my own interpolated responses that contextualize Lotman's philosophical ruminations on aesthetics through the continued reflection on the metasonnetry of E. A. Robinson. In particular, Lotman's assertion—inspired by the evolution of life—that "a text can exist […] only if another text precedes it, and that an advanced culture must have been preceded by an advanced culture (M. Lotman 268)" will be set alongside the metapoetics of how a poem can also serve as its own *ars poetica*. This unconventional approach brings to mind the intermingling of texts in Jacques Derrida's experimental *Glas* from 1974. In *Glas*, Derrida bifurcates each page of the book with two columns of text—the left column reckons with the philosophy of Hegel while the right wrestles with the poetry of Genet. On every page, line abuts line, forcing the reader to consider the other text and, thereby, read the ostensible single text of the book with the duplexity of its parts.

This experiment of mine will differ in its rhetorical objective to create, rather, a dialogue and, in this way, model and presage the third section of this study, which will turn to Martin Buber's philosophy of dialogue, especially as expressed in *I and Thou*, as a means to meaning in the explosions, duplex and dynamic, that arise in the reading of poetry. This final component of the study's implicit equation—D + D + D = PE, that duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue lead to poetic ecstasy—finds its theoretical underpinning, in terms of aesthetic theory, here in Lotman's essay, which, to my genuine astonishment and delight, dovetails this dissertative exploration into the phenomenology of metapoetics swimmingly. Without further ado, then, we will commence with this dialogue between Juri Lotman and our readerly selves, paragraph by paragraph, in the spirit of inquiry that Heidegger embarked

on in his interview with a Japanese interlocutor about the philosophical foundations of poetry.

> Art is a peculiar, extremely specific form of activity involving the creation of a world of secondary reality, a world that, on the one hand, is separate from the first reality while, on the other hand, is always in some relationship to it. Art never tires of finding new modes of relating to reality, from total separation to total merging. But in principle, neither total separation nor total merging is possible. Art can only imitate such extremes by constructing an image of total separation or total merging. In the space between these poles there is a virtually unlimited variety of transitional forms. On the whole, man is submerged in a space that is bordered on one side by real life and on the other by a quasi-reality of various likenesses created by man. This space is not inwardly homogenous. On the one hand, it is made up of gradually-evolving layers that flow smoothly and logically into one another. These layers come together as if in some kind of complete and consistent world. On the other hand, it contains certain explosive structures that disturb logical movement forward and create essentially unpredictable situations. A world created according to such a model, however, possesses another mechanism that further complicates it. The entire structure is subject to redoubling in the consciousness of the individual. The degree to which the image of the world that arises in the individual's consciousness is linked to the original may vary. It oscillates between maximal approximation and maximal separation (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 199 – 200).

Duplexities abound. Such is the message that this first paragraph makes clear, in both form and content, about the functions of art. Lotman's lexical choices exclaim this explicitly, noting that art involves the "creation of a world of secondary reality" and that a world so created is "subject to redoubling in the consciousness of the individual [experiencing the work of art]" (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 199). Lotman's sentential structures reiterate the message further. Just as the lexicon is paired off with the fighting forms of superlatives—as in "total separation" versus "total merging" or "maximal approximation" versus "maximal separation"—the transitional phrases and their attending sentence structures evoke the sentiment with which Martin Buber begins *I and Thou*: "The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude" (Buber, *Thou* 53). Lotman even repeats the pair of contrastive phrases—"one the one hand" and "on the other hand"—twice as if to underscore the import of this redoubling. That said, Lotman makes clear that art, these bifurcations notwithstanding, is richly nuanced and, indeed, unique in how it works upon any given individual experiencing its world-making wonders: "In the space between these poles there is a virtually unlimited variety of transitional forms" (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 199). The foregoing chapter, "Explosions of Synesthesia," delves into the thick of this claim: The experience of art is intense, intimate, and idiosyncratic. As to that last point, its idiosyncrasy, the assertion of the uniqueness of every encounter of aesthetic experience bears reiteration. That is, to return to the explosions of synesthesia that emerged in the reading of Robinson's metasonnet, another reading by me would result in a novel set of duplexities of poetic artifice that would break symmetry to explode in the mind of the reader. And this unique instance of a poem (or any work of art) is, as Lotman writes, redoubled in consciousness, becoming a duplexity (and a veritable cooperation) between poet and reader, oscillating between the polar compositions of each, a construction of emergence through both.

> The function of art among other forms of human reconstruction of reality is defined by the extreme freedom it enjoys. Limits dictated by the actual level of technology, by real needs, by scientific laws concerning the creation of the world, and by notions of morality or religious ideas enter into art and, to a certain extent, influence it. But art, by its very nature, lies outside all these influences, a fact that gives it an extreme degree of freedom in modelling reality (200).

As constructs of the mind, the freedom that art enjoys, as Lotman states, is indeed extreme. Poetry, to be sure, is a byword for artistic freedom: Witness the meaning behind the phrase *poetic license*. Yet, counterintuitively, conventions that constraint freedom are integral to the art, for poetry, and literature in general, is composed wholly of language, itself a union of rules and convention of constraint that, curiously, enable the freedom of infinite expression. Indeed, the very constraints that delimit language, that enable it to be understood between speakers or correspondents, are the rules of syntax and the conventions of the lexicon. Granted, poets can certainly bend syntactical and lexical agreements to the breaking point—and do, as in, say, concrete poetry or Dadaist poetry—but, on the whole, as the experience of the poem is realized through the experience of language, poetic freedom is wholly tethered to the rules of language and conventions of poetics. Yet, curiously, this is exactly what frees poetry as an art, for language is a complex of systems working to achieve meaning, and this very complexity can result, as Lotman asserts, in "the unpredictability of an unpredictable shift" (208).

> The freedom of artistic modelling is guaranteed by the fact that works of art are always a breakthrough into the new, into a sphere of artistic language that was until that point non-existent. Every work of art is a new text in a new language. At the moment of explosion, the new artistic language that appears is just as unique as the text written in that language. Only later is this text made into the source of a new language, which has been mastered by a particular group. This inevitably results in a two-stepped process (200).

This paragraph of Lotman's essay brings to mind the thesis of Timothy Steele's *Missing Measures: Modern Poetry and the Revolt against Meter*, which was considered in an earlier chapter, "Literacies of Style". The work of T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound had an explosive effect on contemporary readers of the early twentieth century, and a new artistic language emerged whose "poetry emulates the rhythmical freedom of prose" (Steele 71). Later, as Lotman indicates here, the free-verse text was made into the source of a new language, which has, indeed, not only become mastered by contemporary poets but ascended to a state of monolingual hegemony. As noted in that earlier chapter, both Eliot and Pound read and wrote in verse; neither intended nor expected the free-verse revolution to be wholly won and verse itself vanquished completely (66). In this historical light, those texts written in poetic form and metapoetically in conversation with a centuries-old tradition, like Robinson's metasonnet, might, as with works of ancient Greek or Latin, are well on the way to be relegated to the specialized readership of scholars and, as an artistic language of "memorability and delight," dying.

> There is an essential difference between the artistic modelling of the world from within an explosive moment and the subsequent interpretation of

> the results of this process. The former appears, as we have already noted, as a moment in which text and language are produced simultaneously and so does not lend itself to simple understanding. Understanding always involves the translation of an unknown object into the language of well-known concepts. In the given case, however, the mechanisms for its translation have yet to appear; only the need is there. Therefore, by generating texts in languages yet to be formulated, the explosive moment sets up a polysemous interpretative field. Only after the explosive moment has passed does the possibility arise for translating these texts into an already existing cultural language. This clarification, however, is at the same time an impoverishment, and so interpreters dealing with a sufficiently complex text are rarely satisfied with any one translation. A bundle of interpretations emerges, and when we are dealing with a sufficiently complex text, a variety of interpretations is perpetuated for centuries. Furthermore, the cultural value of the original text consists precisely in the variety of interpretations, which guarantees the continuation of the text's explosive state through time. For example, Cervantes's *Don Quixote* is a complex text that was not viewed as a unified whole at the moment of its creation. However, it was later transformed in the course of an extended explosion that was capable of generating ever new interpretations (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 200 – 201).

The insight gained by Juri Lotman through his duplexic vision of his father as a result of his stroke in Munich was that time—or, rather, the perception of time—and its effects are twofold, resulting in gradual changes or explosive ones. In this, the gradual and explosive processes find an apt analogue in the life cycle of stars, which, for hundreds of

millions of years might well gradually change in color, size, and mass, only to explode into a radically influential transformative state, as in in the creation of black holes. Importantly, Lotman glosses here the duplexity citing that its mechanism works, in effect, for both the poet and reader. In the creative act of composition, gradual explosive processes are at work for the poet; likewise, in translating the written text into living thought, so to speak, readers, too, experience both gradual and explosive processes of their own individual and unique creation. I agree with the notion that only after a readerly explosive moment has passed can "the possibility arise for translating these texts into an already existing cultural language" (201), though new languages, too, might well be demanded of such a literary explosion, finding no fitting lexicon for the novel poetics that follow. That said, linguistically, every poem—I daresay every line of every poem—sets up a polysemous interpretive field for the reader, which, in my reading here, suggests that the potential explosive moments, both big and small, are commonplace. Their only real limitation to the "bundle of interpretation [that] emerges" are the literacies of the writer and reader, for percipience, in this matter, is everything (201). This was the focus of enquiry in "Literacies of Style," and one that will occupy the dissertation's final chapter, "Styles of Literacy," which will prescribe pedagogical strategies for the teaching of poetry. And the assurance that a richly deserving work of literature thrives is dependent on the literacies of readers to appreciate such explosions set up in the polysemous fields of the work.

> Unifying all concepts of inspiration are a sense of freedom from customary interpretive constraints, the opportunity to reconstruct from the material of the real world other realities, new worlds that have never been seen before, and to reconstruct all over again the newest and most

> incomprehensible of them: the world of the ordinary and the everyday (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 201).

Poetry's powers of mimesis are highlighted here; and, insofar as language focuses the workings of the mind toward this reconstructive effort, the peculiarities of linguistic perception, including the connotative ushering of poetry as embodied, say, in the effects of literary synesthesia (detailed in the previous chapter), words, curiously, are both the hardiest and the most fragile of such media. Given the universality of this experience and the breadth of literary history across the world, these workings remain astonishingly little understood, demanding the likes of a John Gardner to impressionistically offer a glimpse of some insight into the conscious decisions of the writer and demanding as well the astute reader to weigh how they work toward the experience of the writer's intentions.

> Such reconstruction results not only in a revival of our consciousness of the world but in a revival of our sensible perception of that world. Once quotidian reality has become habitual, it ceases to be perceptible to us—to our senses and to our consciousness—which is to say, it ceases to exist. The secondary reconstruction of this reality by the means at art's disposal transforms the usual into the unusual, on the one hand, and the unusual into the usual, on the other. This revives our consciousness, our experience of the world, twice over as if recreating in us the intellectual and emotional curiosity of Adam seeing the world for the first time. This phenomenon was first mentioned by the Russian formalists and defined as "*ostranenie*" ("estrangement," or defamiliarization"), the transformation of the usual into the strange. This relationship to reality constitutes a boundary toward which

> all varieties of creative work strive and represents one of the poles of human consciousness (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 202).

Here, I am reminded of Van Gogh's or Picasso's use of green to draw attention to skin in a portrait. There is an inherent strangeness to art, especially poetry, whose workings require the summoning of the familiar, the way a black-and-white photograph brings the forms of the world to the fore in our world of living color, throwing them into greater relief. The lexical strangeness of E. A. Robinson's metasonnet—take *joyance*, for example, or *scullion*—are evocative in a way that more pedestrian words (say, *joy* or *kitchen help*) are not. At first blush, this may seem counter-intuitive, adding complexity where it need not be; but strangeness is remarkable—worthy of note—and the connotative and semiotic echoes borne by Robinson's lexical choices at these vital moments of the poem are artfully deployed, making memorable meaning through the fiction of poetic artifice.

> In *Anna Karenina*, Tolstoy reproduces what is perhaps the most secret moment of artistic creation—the transformation of an explosion into an interpreted text. Tolstoy describes that interval when the creative work is yet to be fully formulated and is the very embodiment of transition, that is, the moment of dissolution of the structure and the revelation of its potential:
>
> > He couldn't work when he was cold just as he couldn't when he was too comfortable and saw everything too clearly. There was only one stage in this transition from cold to inspiration when it was possible to work. But now he was too agitated. He wanted to cover up the painting but stopped, and,

> holding the canvas in his hand, smiling blissfully, he looked for a long time at the figure of John. Finally, as if sad to tear himself away, he put the canvas down and went home, tired but happy. (Tolstoi 1982, IX: 49 – 50) (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 202 – 203)

This description of Tolstoy's evokes Milan Kundera's character of Sabina's in *The Unbearable Lightness of Being*. A Czech exile in California, Sabina has been working on a canvas with diligence when she accidently mars the piece with a bright red drop of oil paint (Kundera 215 – 217). As she frets over how to excise the error, she grows in its consideration, eventually coming to see that the surrounding painting is the error and the drop itself as the work of art. Or, rather, she comes to see that what the work was missing was the drop of red in apposition with the rest of the canvas—the two fighting forms, the intended and the accidental, the expected and the providential, now, together, explode into aesthetic meaning. The fighting forms of Joan Miró's famous double self-portrait from 1937, whose cartoonishly abstract outlines complement the detailed and realistic representation beneath (made decades earlier), work in similar fashion.

> In the same work Tolstoy describes with exceptional insight the interweaving of design—the realm of conscious creative effort—and chance, which is unpredictable by its very nature:
>
> > He made a sketch for a figure of a man in a fit of anger; but he was dissatisfied with it. "No, the other was better… Where is it?" He went into his wife's room and,

without looking at this wife, asked his eldest daughter where the paper was that he had given them. The paper with the rejected sketch was found, but it was stained and spotted with stearin. All the same he took the sketch, placed it facing him on the table and, moving it further away and then closer, began to examine it. Suddenly he smiled and joyfully flung his hands in the air.

"Yes, Yes!" he said and then, grabbing a pencil, he began rapidly to sketch. The spot of stearin lent the figure a new pose, and he suddenly recalled the energetic face of a merchant with a protruding chin from whom he'd borrowed cigarettes, and it was this face, this chin that he drew. He laughed with joy. This dead, fictional figure suddenly came to life in such a way that it would have been impossible to alter it. The figure was alive and clearly and confidently defined. The sketch could be improved in conformity with the demands of the figure; it was possible and even necessary to place the legs differently, to change entirely the position of the left hand, to push the hair back. But in making these improvements, he didn't change the figure; he simply took away whatever was hiding it. It was as if removing from it those coverings partially obscured the figure; every new feature only served to better display the entire figure in all its energetic power, just as it had suddenly appeared to him from

> the spot created by the stearin. (Tolstoi 1982, IX: 41 – 42)
>
> (Lotman, Unpredictable 204)

This second passage of Tolstoy's depicting the artistic process exemplifies the equation (D + D + D = PE) that recapitulates our thesis: Duplexities are dynamic; dynamics are dialogical; and dialogues are ecstatic. In this instance, the happenstance of the stearin on the sketch creates a duplexity of phenomena that, momentarily, fails to dynamically and creatively explode. The stearin, like Sabina's drop of red paint, appears erroneous rather than effectual. Once the artist sees the stearin as a source of inspiration, the symmetry breaks between the sketch and the stain, and the explosion unleashes a torrent of creative energy, which is informed by the dialogue between the fighting forms of the stearin and the sketch yet extending beyond it into a new artistic space beyond what the sketch sans stearin might have offered—an ecstasy, if you will, a standing outside the self.

> Tolstoy's description lends itself to a dual interpretation. This is because the process represented by Tolstoy is fundamentally polysemous. Conveying the indeterminacy of the dynamic state by means of the determinacy of its verbal reflection must—and inevitably does—produce the possibility of an entire series of interpretive projections. For example, the episode described by Tolstoy can be interpreted as chance. The stain, brought about by entirely different reasons and inscribed in an entirely different set of cause-and-effect relationships, encroaches on a world foreign to it, the world of the sketch, and deforms its interpretive trajectory. And so, the new is born at the chance intersection of structures that are unrelated to each other (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 204).

In this manner, the sketch and stain are akin to the words of a sonnet connected by the accident of rhyme; the sketch and stain are also akin to the tenor and vehicle of a metaphor, for their very dissimilarity is what fuels the aptness of their comparison. What is most striking here is that Tolstoy's depiction reveals the artist's insight as the spark to the explosion resulting from the breaking of symmetry of the fighting forms of the sketch and stain. For this to happen, then, agency is required of the artist, just as such agency is required of the reader of poetry to bring the fighting forms of poetic artifice to life through such a process. Agency, as such, demands powers of insight born of experience and knowledge. The importance of this—of education's role in enabling the insightful reading of poetry's duplexities, dynamics, and dialogues—is why the penultimate chapter of this dissertation is dedicated to the examination of the pedagogy of poetic literacy.

> This situation, however, lends itself to another interpretation. As early as the eighteenth century it was said that the apple that fell from the tree was, according to the well-known biographical anecdote, the immediate cause of Newton's discovery, would have simply bloodied the nose of another man. From the point of view of the anecdote, the origin of this scientific discovery is contained not in the apple but in the inner maturation of Newton's ideas. One can interpret the episode described by Tolstoy in the same way. The new pose in Mikailov's sketch matures in his consciousness. The very fact of the artist's initial dissatisfaction with the sketch is already the result of the potential generation of a new image. In this cause-and-effect series, the spot observed by Makailov plays a role in the interpretive process no larger than the one played by a midwife at the birth of a child. The particularity of this

> situation, however, is located in the unity and indivisibility of both of these interpretations (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 205).

Lotman's metaphor is mistaken or, at the very least, overstated: The role of the stain is certainly more responsible for the birth of the resulting sketch than "the one played by a midwife" (205). To be sure, the artist's dissatisfaction is manifest and fuels the drive to rework the drawing, but the happenstance of the sketch is as responsible for the revisioning as the artist. Had the stain been elsewhere or shaped otherwise, the artist's intuitive powers of insight may not have been triggered. Agency and accident, then, both play a role here in the way these fighting forms have broken symmetry the way they have. A better metaphor might be found in conception rather than birth: Both egg and sperm contribute equally, genetically speaking, to the organism to be, notwithstanding the obvious asymmetry of size.

> The fact that the moment of creation, described by the Romantic word "inspiration," is located outside the boundaries of mono-semantic logical description makes it, it would seem, natural territory for Romanticism. The opposition between the explosive moment, which generates ideas, and the textual results of that moment became the theme for a great many Romantic storylines (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 205 – 206).

Indeed, a great many Romantic storylines have metapoetically exploded to result in the renewal of idea generation and textual results. The Arthurian romances of E. A. Robinson himself might be considered in just this light, where the explosion of the moment between, say, Lancelot and his queen, could unleash epic course of verse. More to the project at hand, Robinson's metasonnet's sestet, referencing "shapes and echoes that are

never done" result in "battles that are never won" (Robinson, *Sonnets* 25). In terms of creative production, the poet's use of rhyme, collocation, and metaphor—working through the poetic artifices of sound, diction, and image—each simultaneously engage the resulting complexified text through their own arcs of explosion.

> In its struggle with Romanticism, Realist literature of the mid-nineteenth century often presented the world of the writer as quotidian, associated with everyday concerns, and even presented writing at times as a lowly pursuit. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Russian poet Aleksei Merzliakov, while polemiciszing with the pre-Romantic notion of poetry as the inspiration of genius, referred to it as "holy labour"[52] (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 205 – 206).

Lotman's deployment of Merzliakov's oxymoron brings to mind John Gardner's reference of F. Scott Fitzgerald's comment that "there is a peasant in every good novelist" (Gardner, *Becoming* 63). The poet, like a novelist, is both master of and slave to the art.

> It was Pushkin, however, who most profoundly reflected this contradiction. In the draft known under the working title "Egyptian Nights," he switched the positions in stable romantic clichés, making romantic "inspiration" appear as the most common prose and the prose of poetic labour, as that true state of the soul that can be expressed only in diffident, somewhat crude terms:

Charksy was doing his utmost to smooth away the intolerable sobriquet [of writer—Ju. L.]. He avoided the company of his fellow literati, preferring society people, even the most vacuous. His conversation was the most trivial and never touched on literature. In his dress he always observed the very latest fashion with the timidity and superstition of a young Muscovite who has come to Petersburg for the first time in his life. His study, decorated like a woman's boudoir, held nothing reminiscent of a writer; there were no books strewn atop or beneath the tables; there was not that brand of disorder that reveals the presence of the Muse and the absence of brush and broom. Charsky was in despair if one of his society friends caught him with a pen in his hand. It is hard to believe to what rifles a man gifted with talent and soul can go. He pretended at one moment to be a passionate huntsman and at the next, a frenzied gambler, or the finest gourmet although he could in no way distinguish a mountain breed from an Arabian thoroughbred, could never remember trump, and secretly preferred a baked potato to all the inventions of French cuisine. He led a most dissipated life; hanging around all the balls, eating around at all the diplomatic dinners. He was as inevitable at every guest-night as Rezanov's ice cream.

He was, however, a poet, and his passion was invincible. When such *rubbish* (this is what he called inspiration) [italics are Pushkin's—Ju. L.] came over him, Charsky would lock himself in his study and write from morning until late at night. He confessed to his

> closest friends that only at such moments did he know true happiness. (VIII: 264)

Pushkin ostentatiously inverts the situation. The Romantic relationship to poetry is the result of everyday banality (compare this to Pasternak's verse: "Быть знаменитым некрасиво." [It is unsightly to be famous] (Pasternak 1989, II: 74) (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 206 – 207)

If, by banality, Lotman refers to such happenstances as the stain of stearin, then, yes, poetry is certainly the result of the banal made sacred through the insight of the poet. With "holy labour" or "the peasant novelist," the ethos of the writer is assertively described, the same which Pushkin describes when Charsky is at his happiest. For Pasternak, too, it was not the baubles of societal gold—a Nobel Prize, for instance—that compelled him to write even after his expulsion from the Soviet writers' union, finding secondhand joy in the translation of Shakespeare's plays, which, today, remain the most admired in Russian. To poets, the Romantic notion of inspiration, as Rilke discovered when faced with Rodin's superhuman productivity, is erroneous. As joy's soul lies in the doing, a poet's happiness lies in the making.

> Romantic "inexpressibility" is too expressible and cliché-ridden in pre-packaged words. And so, inexpressibility, an integral feature of creative explosion, is expressed by silence (compare this with the theme of silence in Tsvetaeva) or by the shockingly prosaic phrase—"such rubbish." And so, what is constant here is not some stable feature but a change in the type of expression and in the explosive character of that change. Therefore a creative

> "explosion" can be expressed just as well in an unpredictable shift from the everyday to the fantastic as it can in a redoubled variant: the unpredictability of an unpredictable shift (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 207 – 208).

The silence of inexpressibility is akin to the silence of poetic ecstasy. The onset of a state of being dumbfounded due to the effects of poetic artifice, a spiritual stunning through aesthetic stimuli, is, too, an unpredictable shift. Lotman, of course, is right: Creative explosions are unpredictable, tacking in directions that depend wholly on the unique symmetry breaking born of each unique pairing. Another artist, upon seeing the stearin, would have revisited the sketch otherwise; the same artist, encountering a different stain, would have pursued another course (if at all).

> This shift can express itself in a return to the everyday. And so, while the Symbolist tradition cultivated the poetic as unusual, exotic, the Futurists imposed on the poetic a layer of secondary explosion in which positions were shifted, making the vulgar poetic and the crude refined. As a result of this, a many-layered shift in the artistic structures of their negation appears more and more complex, and these structures demand more and more refinement for the aesthetic experience; in the end, this naturally instills a general desire to go beyond the limits of art and to substitute non-art for art. This constant shifting in the field of artistic languages, this fluctuation between maximal complexity, which generates simplicity, and maximal simplicity, which generates complexity, constitutes the dynamic field of art (Lotman, *Unpredictable* 208).

Here again, the fighting forms appear as oppositional appositions, just as they do in Franz Marc's *Kämpfende Formen*. Though Lotman's characterization here evokes an elegant simplicity—the simple becomes complex; the complex, simple—and though I am wont to take pains to underscore the immense complexity of explosions born of the duplexities of poetic artifice, the equation holds up. What interests me is the relationship between the dynamics of such duplexities—and it is here that the dialogic form of this chapter serves as a prelude to the discussion of this third and final section of this dissertation. Whereas the first part of this study explored the idea of duplexities of poetic artifice and the second plumbed their dynamics, this third part will consider the dynamics of duplexities in poetry through the prism of dialogue, which displays the riches of the text writ large in ways that other readings cannot. More precisely, the philosophy of dialogue as delineated in Martin Buber's *I and Thou* will, in the final section of this essay, serve as the touchstone by which the complexities and simplicities of a poem can be evaluated. Toward this end, the organization of this third section will begin with an introduction to Martin Buber and an overview of the transformative power of dialogue in *I and Thou*, which will be followed by a reflective assessment of this study and a suggested pedagogy of play for its curricular application, both of which are tendered with the intent of improving the poetic literacies of both teacher and student.

Dialogue: *I and Thou*

> This is the eternal source of art: a man is faced by a form which desires to be made through him into a work. This form is no offspring of his soul, but is an appearance which steps up to it and demands of it the effective power. The man is concerned with an act of his being. If he carries through, if he speaks the primary word out of his being to the form which appears, then the effective power streams out, and the work arises (Buber, Smith 8).

Aller guten Dinge sind drei. So goes the old German saw: All good things come in threes. This study began with a consideration of *Kämpfende Formen* by Franz Marc, housed in Munich's Pinakothek der Moderne, which initiated our exploration of the concept of duplexity in poetic artifice, the idea that patterns and forms in a poem are paired off in the mind of the reader as in the redoubled effects of rhyme and metaphor; this survey of poetic duplexity formed the first part of this tripartite study of poetic ecstasy. The second part considered the concept of poetic dynamics, the notion that, once paired off as a duplexity, borrowing a trope from quantum physics, symmetry between the two forms of the duplexity breaks, resulting in what Juri Lotman referred to in his late work as an explosion. The trajectories of such poetic explosions—occurring, as they do, in the mind of readers—are singularly unique and wholly dependent on the happenstances of the moment, for a re-reading by the same reader will result in qualitatively different explosions. Lotman apprehended the concept of explosions in culture while witnessing, from the close yet safe distance of Munich, the disintegration of the Soviet Union. During his stay in the Bavarian capital, Lotman had a stroke, which, though he recovered enough to eventually write again,

transformed his literary style and rhetoric, resulting in a declarative approach of simple sentences that favored, above all, a limpidity of genuineness.

And so it is that, with the third time being a charm, Munich again appears at the outset of the final part of the study. The duplexities of a poem that dynamically explode in the mind of the reader, it will be argued here in this conclusive triptych of chapters, can be read as a dialogue. And, in sum, this manner of reading a poem—by being attentive to the duplexities of poetic artifice, by being receptive to the dynamic explosions of these poetic duplexities, and by reflecting on these subsequent explosions as an aesthetically meaningful dialogue writ between the lines of the poem—can result in the onset of a state of poetic ecstasy by the reader. As Eckermann reports the great German poet to have said:

> 'The highest state of mind we can attain to,' observed Goethe at this point, 'is wonderment, and if the primary phenomenon excites wonderment we must be content with that. It cannot give us anything more, and we should not look beyond it for anything more; this is where the line is drawn (Eckermann 266).'

Martin Buber—the Austrian-Jewish philosopher of dialogue, considered a poet by his first English translator, Ronald Gregor Smith (Buber, Smith x)—married a writer from Munich, Paula Winkler, who converted to Judaism and moved to Israel with Buber, where their relationship continued to inspire, muse-like, the radical precepts that lay at the heart of *I and Thou*. Buber cites the marital ideal as an exemplum of an I-Thou relationship:

> Marriage, for instance, will never be given new life except by that out of which true marriage always arises, the revealing by two people of the *Thou* to

> one another. Out of this a marriage is built up by the *Thou* that is neither of the *I*'s. This is the metaphysical and metapsychical factor of love to which feelings of love are mere accompaniments (Buber, Smith 33).

But we have gotten ahead of ourselves, and a review of Buber's philosophy of dialogue, which will make clear how this archaic English pronoun, Thou, is being appropriated, is now due. At the outset of his 1923 lyrical work of philosophy (and theology), Martin Buber asserts that the world of humankind is twofold, recalling this study's many assertions of the ubiquity of poetic duplexity (Buber, Smith 53). Buber sees the encounter of the individual consisting of relationships with the world—and these relationships, too, are twofold—as I-It and I-Thou. An I-It relationship is denotative, transactional, one of subject meeting object. An I-Thou relationship is connotative, transcendent, one of subject meeting subject. We need the former, for such relationships allow us to navigate a world where expectations are met; after all, much of what enables our present world and, consequently, our very lives to run smoothly is indeed transactional, contractual, and obligatory. But a life of only such transactional relationships lacks the transcendent and affirming power of love. In *Martin Buber's* I and Thou*: Practicing Living Dialogue*, Kenneth Paul Kramer characterizes what Buber refers to as *Beziehung* in German as "a mutual presence, to I-Thou relationships that embody a past, present, and a potential for the future" and "a close human bonding in which both partners affirm, accept, and confirm each other" (Kramer, *I and Thou* 204). Kramer adds to the definition thusly:

> Genuine relationship between persons is an unanticipated occurrence, a spontaneously reciprocal event. Rather than a self-contained "experience,"

> the moment of meeting activates, between persons, the emergence of something new, beyond words (48).

And, in another primer on Buber's philosophy of dialogue, Kramer elaborates the meanings of the three verbs that enable the imagination and realization of this elevated form of dialogue:

> By making the other present, we confirm the inmost self-becoming of our partners in dialogue. In this perspective, Buber distinguished three interrelated orientations: *acceptance*, *affirmation*, and *confirmation*. These inter-linked behaviors move from generic acceptance (accepting the other as a person like ourselves), to specific affirmation (affirming the other in their unique historic, cultural, or ethnic personhood), and confirming the other (validating the other's present stance and their direction of movement into the future) (Kramer, *Dialogue* 56).

Kramer reports how his colleague at San José State University, Maurice Friedman, a friend of Martin Buber and early translator of his work into English, cogently gets to the gist of *I and Thou* from another angle: "I-Thou is a dialogue in which the other is accepted in his or her unique otherness and not reduced to a content of my experience" (Kramer, *I and Thou* 122). Kramer details the four stages of Buber's methodology toward the aforementioned orientations of acceptance, affirmation, and confirmation: turning, addressing, listening, and responding (Kramer, *Dialogue* xi). "Turning," explains Kramer, "reorienting yourself, begins by stopping what you are doing at the moment, and becoming alert to the presence of another person beyond yourself, who has entered your sphere of awareness" (22). In a

word, this turning amounts to a deliberate act of what is referred to sometimes as mindfulness or intention. In our turning toward, we are also turning from: Our attention to the other becomes focused, deliberate, and unencumbered by the cacophony of either the world outside or within ourselves. This turning, in short, is a pivoting—though not one as "a performance art, nor a product of proficiency, nor is it a planned-out strategy" but "rather a deeply held ideal […] to become brand new *with* and *for* others (Kramer, *Dialogue* 36). This turning evokes mutuality, which is vital, for, to be authentic, "dialogue must be *mutual*" (36).

> Metaphorically speaking, Buber characterized *mutuality* in relation to others as standing on the insecure "narrow ridge" between conflicting absolutes, between subjectivity and objectivity, right and wrong, between life and death itself. On this narrow ridge, where there is no certainty of expressible knowledge, a space opens where real mutuality between humans occurs (Kramer, *Dialogue* 36).

Addressing, the second stage of Buber's methodology in authentic dialogue, is a conscious act of candor and honesty imbued with respectfulness and tolerance. As Kramer characterizes its "interconnected, two-sided meaning": "On the one hand, it means 'facing'; the other, presenting yourself, approaching the other" (Kramer, *Dialogue* 45). By dint of illustration, Kramer shares an extraordinary anecdote by Maurice Friedman of the day that T. S. Eliot met Martin Buber. Ronald Gregor Smith, the first English translator of *I and Thou*, had organized the meeting of the two. Buber was in London, and Eliot, who had read the English translation of *I and Thou*, was keen to meet him. Of course, the instances of antisemitism in the poetry of T. S. Eliot were not unknown to the celebrated "Jewish-

German existential philosopher of dialogue" (53). Of this encounter, T. S. Eliot wrote to Friedman, recounting his impressions:

> I once had a conversation with Dr. Buber … and I got the strong impression that I was in the company of a great man. There are only a very few men of those whom I have met in my lifetime, whose presence has given me that feeling (53).

Friedman, referring to the charges of antisemitism in Eliot's poetry, met with Buber just days after his meeting with the poet and, in light of Eliot's antisemitism, raised the issue: "'Don't you find that your opinions and those of T. S. Eliot differ in important respects?' Buber responded, 'When I meet a man I am not concerned with opinions but with the man'" (53). Buber's notion of addressing someone genuinely and authentically demands

> Turning away from all self-preoccupations and distractions and toward full attention to the other. Everyone who addresses others in this way, addresses their specific, definitive, personal existence. It is only possible to make someone fully present by concentrating all your attention, all your energy, all your interests upon how the person is able to listen to you and what that person has to say" (62).

The third stage of Buber's four-part methodology of fostering dialogue is that of listening. Attentive listening in this manner, according to Buber, is better thought of as obedient listening rather than active listening. Whereas active listening, an oft-taught and admired skill, involves having a reason for listening, suspending judgement, and pausing

before responding, obedient listening refers more reflexively to the listening process itself. The obedient listener, through turning and addressing, encounters the other with one's whole being (that is, with one's body, mind, and spirit); imagining what the other is thinking, feeling, and perceiving; and attending to what is both said and left unsaid through meaning-directed questions (70). Though *obedient* connotes passivity, as in the slave's obedience to the master's will, Buber's appropriates the adjective boldly. In his understanding, obedient listening is neither capitulation nor the mere act of hearing but, rather, a supreme act of imagination. Upon that selfsame narrow ridge that Buber cited as a metaphor for the workings of mutuality, between the duplexity of oneself and the other, whose tension is itself a chasm, the breaking of symmetry calls for a decisive action. In *The Knowledge of Man*, Buber evokes this as an image of obedient listening and its role in the creation of dialogic experience:

> Some call it intuition, but that is not a wholly unambiguous concept. I prefer the name 'imagining the real', for in its essential being this gift is not a looking at the other but boldly swinging—demanding the most intensive stirring of one's being—into the life of the other (Kramer, *Dialogue* 80).

The fourth stage of Buber's methodology of authentic dialogue is responding. Responding complements confirmation, an assent to engagement in the acceptance and affirmation of the other. The need for confirmation is universal, an irredeemable fact of existence. As Buber offers in another passage from *The Knowledge of Man*, such confirmation by others, too, is universal:

> Sent forth from the natural domain of species into the hazard of the solitary category, surrounded by the air of a chaos which came into being with him, then secretly and bashfully he watches for a Yes which allows him to be and which can come to him only from one man to another. It is from one person to another that the heavenly bread of self-being is passed (Kramer, *Dialogue* 87).

At its best, dialogue, insists Buber, is not subjective, not borne by the activity of just one person's efforts in the manner of, say, grammaticality where the subject exercises agency over the object. "The life of human beings," writes Buber near the outset of *I and Thou*, "is not passed in the sphere of transitive verbs" (Buber, Smith 4). Dialogue is a mutuality where truly "seeing the other is finally possible only when there is some form of relational reciprocity and equality between them" (Kramer, *Dialogue* 89).

Turning, addressing, listening, responding; acceptance, affirmation, confirmation: Four by three—the same proportions as octave to sestet. This serendipity conveniently returns us to poetry and, recalling the courtly love themes of the form's origins in thirteenth-century Italy, to Paula Winkler, the Munich poet (who published under the pen name of Georg Munk) (89). Buber met her in the summer of 1899 while at the University of Zurich, recognizing that "she was in many ways emotionally stronger and more mature than [himself]"—not least in her possession of "an impressive intellect and poetic talent" (89). In her, Buber found his *Thou*. They fell in love and married, which necessitated Paula leaving her family, home, and religion. As Kenneth Paul Kramer sums up plaintively, "Buber came to recognize that a marriage is built not upon feelings, but upon relational respect and trust" (90). As noted earlier, Buber differentiates the institution of marriage from that which enables the quality of dialogue that William Shakespeare, in his best-known sonnet, deemed

"the marriage of true minds" (Vendler 487). Concluding the passage cited in part earlier, Buber underscores the importance of agape over eros, which further buttresses the singular role of the *Thou* in *I-Thou* dialogue.

> Indeed, take the much discussed eroticism of our age and subtract everything that is really egocentric—in other words, every relationship in which one is not at all present to the other, but each uses the other only for self-enjoyment—what would remain? (Buber, Kaufmann 95).

To return to the grammatical metaphor, the *I-Thou* relationship might be considered as a tethering of subjects, with neither the *I* nor the *Thou* assuming the role of the subservient object. This, to conclude the syntactic trope, is more akin to the relationship between subject and reflexive pronoun. Like the break of symmetry that leads to Lotmanian explosion, this appositional pairing is a dynamic form of subjectivity. Of this and the place of desire in the *I-Thou* relationship, Buber expounds:

> Genuine subjectivity can only be dynamically understood, as the swinging of the *I* in its lonely truth. Here, too, is the place where the desire is formed and heightened for ever higher, more unconditioned relation, for the full sharing in being. In subjectivity the spiritual substance of the person matures (Buber, Smith *I and Thou* 44).

At this point, save those who are familiar with Martin Buber's extensions of the I-Thou relationship beyond the interpersonal, readers might well find themselves perplexed by the intrusion of this chapter in what otherwise seems to cohere as an essay on the affective

aesthetics of poetics. Here's the rationale for this curious approach toward this study's conclusion: Buber lays claim that *I-Thou* relationships—that is, the mutuality of genuine dialogue—takes place in three spheres. It may occur between an individual person and nature; it may occur between people; and it may occur between an individual and a work of art. Poetry being the amalgamation that it is concerns the latter two spheres, especially the third. And it is in this light that the resulting Lotmanian explosions from the breaking of symmetry of duplexities of poetic artifice can be read in the manner that Buber advocates in *I and Thou*: These explosive fragments and the never-ending cycle of semiotic emergence therefrom dynamically inform the reader's dialogical experience, enabling and enriching the turning, listening, addressing, and responding to the poetic text. As noted earlier, this experience is singular, unique, and, with the poet on the page face to face with the reader, an interpersonal and intersubjective mutuality.

"The sphere in which the world of relation arises," writes Buber, "are three" (Buber, *I and Thou* 70). The first, as mentioned a moment ago, is through nature—the flora and especially the fauna of the world. In native Hawaiian culture, for instance, there is the concept of the *'aumakua*, which is akin to that of the spirit animal in native American cultures (Malo 39). The *'aumakua* may be an animal or plant (either terrestrial or aquatic) or even a geological formation, and it has a familial or interpersonal relationship with an individual. An encounter with one's *'aumakua* is considered auspicious, and joy and pride are taken in preserving and protecting it. In this, the *'aumakua* relationship exhibits a Buberesque mutuality, a metaphysical symbiosis. One of my brothers, Kevin, for example, is a disease ecologist who has spent his career working with bats, studying them and advocating their conservation for decades; in turn, the study of the bats has not only paid dividends in terms of the vital understanding of the workings of zoonotic spillover, including that of coronaviruses, but also contributed to his professional growth and financial

stability (40). The *'aumakua* of my other brother, Scott, is evident in the talisman he often wears—a large, fossilized shark tooth (82). Scott is a freediver and fisherman who hunts underwater with a speargun. The inevitable presence of sharks has served to make him more cognizant of his surroundings and careful in terms of safety. His relationship with the *'aumakua*, in turn, is a manifestation of the mutuality and deep bonding (i.e. *Verbundenheit*) that Buber speaks of, with one hunter according respect to another. As with Kevin, Scott strongly advocates the protection and conservation of his *'aumakua* (Kramer, *I and Thou* 81).

The second sphere, that between people, the foregoing has addressed, and the third, which Buber speaks of (through Smith's translation) as "spiritual beings," considers the dialogue between an individual person and a work of art. While offering that each sphere "in its own way, through each process of becoming that is present to us we look out toward the fringe of the eternal *Thou*," the relation between an individual and spiritual beings

> is clouded, yet it discloses itself; it does not use speech, yet begets it. We perceive no *Thou*, but none the less we feel we are addressed and we answer—forming, thinking, acting. We speak the primary word with our being, though we cannot utter *Thou* with our lips (Buber, Smith 5).

In *Martin Buber's* I and Thou*: Practicing Living Dialogue*, Kenneth Paul Kramer translates what Buber calls in German *Geistige Wesenheiten* differently from how either Ronald Gregor Smith or Walter Kaufman, translators of two different English renderings of *I and Thou*, do as "spiritual beings," preferring a noun clause to connote a state of continual transformation, "spirit becoming forms," which

> refers to that which is perceived *through* a person who then (almost as a vessel) brings what he or she perceives into form. Spirit becoming forms refers to words, creations, and activities resulting from meetings with the *Thou* (Kramer, *I and Thou* 205).

The example that Buber himself offers in *I and Thou* in how dialogue can inform and enrich aesthetic experience recounts his encounter with a Doric column, a veritable sculpture and its architectural context.

> Out of a church wall in Syracuse, in which it had once been immured, it came to encounter me: mysterious primal mass represented in such simple form that there was nothing individual to look out, nothing individual to enjoy. All that could be done was what I did: took my stand, stood fast, in face of this structure of spirit, this mass penetrated and given body by the mind and hand of man. Does the concept of mutuality vanish here? It only plunges back into the dark, or it is transformed into a concrete content which coldly declines to assume conceptual form, but is bright and reliable (Buber, Kaufman 62).

Whereas an I-It relationship with a work of art would amount to an appraisal of its qualities, an I-Thou relationship engages, through wholeness, its becoming. Put another way, were I to declare *Joe Versus the Volcano* (written and directed by John Patrick Shanley), which I have for years, to be my favorite movie, a natural query by my interlocutor would be, “Why?” And, were I to answer, say, by noting that it is funny, the

question would justly come, “Is it the funniest movie that you have ever seen?” And I would answer that it is not. I would add that it is touching, beautiful, and captivating—yet, in the same breath, I would add that neither is it the most touching nor the most beautiful nor the most captivating film that I have ever seen. The reason why it is my favorite—that is, the reason why I think it is my favorite, for even now I cannot ascertain exactly why it is—has to do with the totality of its whole; and this totality is more than the sum of its parts: In other words, the specific forms its spirit has taken in the context of my encounter with the film came at an impressionable moment in my life. As Kramer glosses, “spirit becoming forms”

> Implies a double meaning—both “spirit” in the process of forming, and the “forms” spirit takes. Thus it is helpful to be aware of the three interrelated regions through which spirit, in *I and Thou*, takes form: in art, ideas, and pure effective action (Kramer, *I and Thou* 63).

Buber’s own commentary here on what Kramer calls spirit becoming forms and the I-Thou relationship with works of art is instructive: “I can neither experience nor describe the form which meets me, but only body it forth” (Buber, Smith 8). This observation speaks to our earlier exploration of the role of synesthesia in poetry and evokes, specifically, Donald Hall’s essay on this theme, “Goatfoot, Milktongue, Twinbird: The Psychic Origins of Poetic Form” and confirms a metaphysical angle to his impish quip about “aural sex”.

Buber elaborates that this embodiment of form and the dynamics of its encounter with those who experience its aesthetic powers is key:

> In art the act of the being determines the situation in which the form becomes the work. Through the meeting that which confronts me is fulfilled, and

> enters the world of things, there to be endlessly active, endlessly to become *It*, but also endlessly to become *Thou* again, inspiring and blessing. It is 'embodied'; its body emerges from the flow of the spaceless, timeless present on the shore of existence (10 – 11).

As this dissertation has lain bare, vivisections of poetry are anatomizing. The constituent elements of Robinson's exemplary poem have been, at times, painstakingly atomized; in the previous pages, we have observed the linguistic workings of poetry through the microscopic lenses of phonology and semantics, line and stanza. Such I-It analyses are vital toward our understanding of the poem—indeed, it might be argued that knowledge informs love, that the parts must be known for the whole to be valued. Such is the conclusion of the first part of this study with regards to poetic duplexity. Yet the second part of the study, considering the dynamics of duplexities in a poem that explode in the breaking of symmetry (and emerge into novel forms and duplexities that explode again *ad infinitum*), accepts that the perfect apprehension by the reader of a poem is impossible and, frankly, unnecessary for the metaphysical experience of an aesthetic encounter. Indeed, the consideration of the dynamics of a poem's coursing in the reader's mind during the act itself highlights the truism that it cannot be described, only bodied forth.

For all this in asserting that a dialogic encounter with a work of art embodies a singular and superlative aesthetic encounter, Buber recognized that there is an element of both sacrifice and risk in this approach to art. Even so, though it might be "no offspring of [one's] soul," art might, nevertheless, present "an appearance which steps up to it and demands of it the effective power" (7). This is the so-called moment before the moment represented so memorably in *Kämpfende Formen*; this is the moment whose nuances of balance effect the course of the breaking of symmetry and the dynamics of the resulting

Lotmanian explosions and their subsequent emergences of infinite other duplexities and explosions. The genuine encounter of art in the sense that Buber advocates is heightened not least because

> [t]he experience includes a sacrifice and a risk. This is the sacrifice: the endless possibility that is offered up on the altar of the form. For everything which just this moment in play ran through the perspective must be obliterated; nothing of that may penetrate the work. The exclusiveness of what is facing it demands that it be so (8).

What Buber refers to here as "the endless possibility that is offered up on the altar of form" echoes in the challenge stated earlier in this study that the superabundance of poetic artifice presents an impossibility for the reader to ever completely experience; alongside this is another fact of linguistic infinity, that of knowledge and memory, for, as poems are allusively composed of other poems, the reader, to decipher and apprehend the aesthetic embodiment of the artistic form, will experience an information gap and, therefore, always be at something of a loss. Buber continues:

> This is the risk: the primary word can only be spoken with the whole being. He who gives himself to it may withhold nothing of himself. The work does not suffer, as do the tree and the man, to turn aside and relax in the world of It: but it commands. If I do not serve it aright it is broken, or it breaks me (8).

As to the referred-to tree and man, these address two other spheres of I-Thou mutuality, nature and humankind—but, though the artistic work, should the primary word of I-Thou be

left unsaid, and its sentient partner will suffer to abide in a lesser state of I-It. Indeed, the poem commands (to appropriate the verb of Robinson's scullion's joyance) to be read and experienced in a wholly embodied way, not to be artificially anatomized or otherwise read as the sum of its discrete instances of artifice and poetics. Not turning, listening, addressing, and responding to the poem as a Thou breaks the possibility of its presence into becoming a form of spirit just as it breaks our own possibilities of the same.

As with the first chapters of the first and second sections of this study, which looked to a painting as a metaphor for duplexity and a symphony as a metaphor for dynamics, this first chapter of the third section of the study is meant to convey a philosophy as a metaphor for dialogue. Taken together, *Fighting Forms*, *The Poem of Ecstasy*, and *I and Thou* speak to the synesthetic synergy that poetry possesses to induce states of poetic ecstasy, the readerly experience of lyrical art, resulting in an intense and intimate entanglement between oneself and the poem whose end is powerfully transformative. "The *It* is the eternal chrysalis," writes Buber, "the *Thou* the eternal butterfly—except that situations do not always follow one another in clear succession, but often there is a happening profoundly twofold, confusedly entangled" (13). So said, I see the confusion of my own entanglement with the metasonnetry of E. A. Robinson as one that has, through more than mere mindfulness, eminently and unabashedly bodied forth. Robert E. Wood, in *Martin Buber's Ontology*, describes how godhead as the eternal Thou can be encountered only obliquely:

> For Buber, God can be met in and through the world, but He cannot be sought or inferred. He cannot be sought because He is everywhere to be found. Turning aside from the world may bring the wisdom of solitude, which is the place where philosophy develops; one may gain concentration of soul; but God does not appear in this way. Every encounter with the finite

> Other gives man a glimpse of fulfillment. In composed expectation he meets and aids the Other, until the ultimate meeting he can gather them all up. All encounter with the finite Other leads up to encounter with the eternal Thou (Wood 92).

Substituting God for poetry, the passage intimates how the piecemeal acquisition of I-It informs the eventual I-Thou reading. Or, as Buber couches the same sentiment: "The *Thou* meets me through grace—it is not found by seeking. But my speaking of the primary word to it is an act of my being, is indeed *the* act of my being (Buber, Smith 8). To this means of mutual becoming, the reading of a poem is akin: It is a profound act of love that can be said only wholly and realized only partially. That is, one's encountering must be whole, but one's meeting can only be partial—for one is equally chosen as much as choosing. "Concentration and fusion into the whole being can never take place through my agency," Buber asserts, "nor can it ever take place with me. I become through my relation to the *Thou*; as I become *I*, I say *Thou*" (9).

Martin and Paula Buber exchanged letters and shared their poems with one another, and it seems fitting to return to the subject of poetry squarely through the exemplum of their I-Thou relationship through verse:

> As these letters suggest, it was with Paula that Buber first came to realize and articulate the "mutual meeting" that characterized the spirit between them. Paula's strength, her integrity, and her responsibility are movingly celebrated in a poem that Buber wrote to her on her 50th birthday, "On the Day of Looking Back." Buber ends the poem with a powerful acknowledgment and confirmation of his wife:

You element and woman,

Soul and nature!

In a later poem, "Do You Still Know It?," Buber credits Paula with helping him find direction for his talents and interests. In it, he wrote two lines that link responding responsibly with "genuine dialogue":

How a mutual animated describing

Arose out of it and lived between you and me!

The phrase "mutually animated describing," and "a mutually moving portrayal." The "between" is thus a two-sided, oscillating human image emerging from Buber's relationship with Paula (Kramer, *I and Thou* 91 – 92).

In *I and Thou*, Buber cites Goethe as a model for how one ought to relate to nature through an I-Thou relationship: "How lovely and how legitimate the soul of the full *I* of Goethe! It is the *I* of pure intercourse with nature; nature gives herself […], revealing her mysteries […] but not betraying her master" (114). Though justly celebrated as a natural philosopher in this context, Goethe celebrated nature through poetry even when steeped in the research and defense of his theory of color, as a reading of Eckermann's *Conversations with Goethe* reveals—and it is precisely for this reason why Goethe's pronouncements on poetry retain their potent relevance. As to the singular reading of any given poem and, as Buber put it, its bodying forth, Goethe offered that a poem, compared to a treatise, "has a much more indefinite effect; it excites an emotional response, yes, but one that differs from one person to the next, depending on the listener's character and abilities" (Eckermann 209). As to the challenge of the superabundance of linguistic information and poetic knowledge demanded of the reader of verse—to say nothing of the impossibility of definitively rationalizing the creative process, including its means of effecting a state of poetic ecstasy—

Goethe cheers this quality of the art's infinity and inexhaustibility: "If imagination did not create things that remain eternally problematic for the rational mind, imagination would not amount to much. This is what distinguishes poetry from prose, where the rational mind is always at home, as it rightly should be" (212). And, finally, speaking of a novel by Alessandro Manzoni that he admired, Goethe described to Eckermann how a toggling between the readerly states of admiration and affect results ecstasy:

> 'The effect on the reader,' Goethe went on, 'is such that you go constantly from being moved to being filled with admiration, and then from admiration you go back to feeling moved again; you alternate between these two sensations the whole time. This, I rather think, is about as good as it gets" (Eckermann 217).

This observation of Goethe's, not least for its duplexity, echoes the thesis of George Steiner's in his final book, *The Poetry of Thought: From Hellenism to Celan*, which is that philosophical wisdom is inextricably bound to the poetry of its expression. As Goethe remarked on the illimitable nature of the imagination in the face of rational thought, Steiner allows that "[p]hilological inquiry, the study of sources (*Quellenforschung*), licit as they are, is unable to marshal the total cultural matrix, the surrounding arts, the intellectual and political climate" (Steiner 177). Sought here in vain is "[a]n embracing system of poetics [that] circumscribes historical, regional and linguistic material" (176). The *conversevole poeta* necessitates otherwise. "Enchantment," as Steiner declares, agreeing with Goethe's assessment of imagination, "is other than understanding" (176): "Meaning," cites Steiner (via Borges, who cites Croce), "must be taken in 'with a single magical glance'" (180).

Near the end of *Conversations with Goethe*, Eckermann reports on Goethe's use of the term "daemonic," which the poet uses to describe "this ineffable mystery of life and the universe"—when the essence of the daemonic is upon us, "it's as if a curtain is being drawn aside to reveal certain things going on at the back of our lives" (Eckermann 391). Though we struggle to investigate this intimation, "we soon realize that the subject is too big and complex and that our eyes can only see so far" (391).

> Man is made for the small things in life, and he only understands and enjoys what he knows. A great connoisseur understands a painting; he is able to see its various details in relation to his wider knowledge of art in general, and he is able to see its various details in relation to both the whole and its parts. He does not prefer one detail over another, is not interested in whether a face is ugly or beautiful, or whether one part of the picture is light or dark; instead, he wants to know if everything is in the right place and as it should be. But if we stand a layman in front of a large painting, we shall see how the composition as a whole either leaves him cold or confuses him; how he is drawn to some parts of the picture and repelled by others; and how, in the end, it is the small things he knows that catch his attention, as he remarks how well the artist has painted this helmet, say, or that plume.
>
> But in essence we are all more or less in the layman's shoes (391).

In 1959, Donald Hall met with T. S. Eliot in New York to interview the future Nobel laureate for the *Paris Review*, where Hall served as poetry editor. At the time, as Hall details in *Their Ancient Glittering Eyes: Remembering Poets and More Poets*, the younger poet was thirty, and, among questions biographical and poetic, Hall had a final question that, for Hall

himself, was deeply personal, one that he says that he was most afraid to ask. As Hall confides in his published account of the interview, the question he was most interested in asking had long been on his mind. Though writing since adolescence, securing the Newdigate Prize at Oxford and publishing verse in *The New Yorker*, Hall was still given to feelings of insecurity about his identity as a poet and the value of his work, experiencing what is now referred to as imposter syndrome. Approaching Eliot, at seventy, with *The Waste Land* and *Four Quartets* securely ensconced in the canon of English literature, Hall asked pointedly whether the elder poet felt sure about his work. Eliot "answered quickly, 'Heavens, no! Do *you*?' I hastened to assure him that I didn't" (Hall, *Ancient* 94).

Indeed, as Goethe says, we are all more or less in the layman's shoes. Just as the awareness of mortality heightens the joys of living, insecurities about our powers to understand a poem in the manner of a connoisseur a painting, seeing its details in relation to both the whole and its parts, ought not to thwart us. And the reason for this, of course, is that the reader of a poem such as Robinson's metasonnet, like the visitor to the Pinakothek der Moderne standing before Franz Marc's *Kämpfende Formen*, seeks more than mere understanding. "Man is made for the small things in life," Goethe said to Eckermann, adding, "and he only understands and enjoys what he knows" (Eckermann 391). Tellingly, Goethe puts understanding ahead of enjoyment in this formulation, though, it might be argued that, as Christopher Butler does in *Pleasure and the Arts: Enjoying Literature, Painting, and Music*, this order ought to be reversed (Butler 17 – 18). Or, in the manner of considering understanding and enjoyment of a poem as a duplexity of fighting forms, we might see the resulting Lotmanian explosion of these terms in apposition as complementary aspects of the imagination, which Jennifer Anna Gosetti-Ferencei, in *The Life of Imagination: Revealing and Making the World*, argues is an act of both consciousness and embodiment, a veritable marriage of the Platonic divide (Gosetti-Ferencei 161 – 165).

Perhaps a more salient point to Goethe's observation about the understanding and enjoyment of art lies in the holistic nature of its encounter with us. In the beginning of *I and Thou*, Buber writes: "Creation reveals, in meeting, its essential nature as form" (Buber, Smith 18). Midway through the text, Buber delineates the creative quality and dialogical nature of this revelation: "Genuine relationship between persons is an unanticipated occurrence, a spontaneously reciprocal event. Rather than a self-contained 'experience,' the moment of meeting activates, between persons, the emergence of something new, beyond words" (48). To this, Goethe might well assent, for the encounter of art and imagination, he said, is too much for "intellect and senses to take in properly" (Eckermann 317).

Dialogue: Reflexivities of Ecstasy

> Sometimes, in desperation over the years, I have imagined giving up, not just this work on Auden, but work on everything, giving up entirely. Writers who admit to this desire – Larkin, say ('Beneath it all, desire of oblivion runs'), or Beckett ('sleep till death / health / come ease / this life disease'), E. M. Cioran – are regarded by some as self-despisers, yet this yearning for ultimate escape seems to be an instinct for self-preservation, and may sometimes even lead us towards self-knowledge and self-respect (Sansom 303).

Ian Sansom spent twenty-five years working on a study of W. H Auden's "September 1, 1939," which was published in 2019 (305 – 341). And, while the book is true to its name in covering the biography (and anatomy) of Auden's famously recanted poem, it is also a fascinating account of writerly remorse and a reckoning of the cost that literary labors can sometimes exact. What I found most valuable in *September 1, 1939: A Biography of a Poem* was what I most enjoyed—when Sansom was not writing about Auden's poem but writing about the struggle to write of Auden's poem. As nothing else can, an author's candor, authentically expressed, about the challenges of the writing process can, curiously, allay the onset of an affective filter, the deleterious effect that emotional stress can exact on the production of language. I feel closely akin to Sansom's concerns, made throughout the book, that his study of a poem, so long in the making, has cost too much of the author's finite time on Earth, that the net balance, the volume now in the reader's hands, the merits of Auden's gifts notwithstanding, will, at some level, be wanting. Like Sansom's, this dissertative study is also the reading of a single poem, which, in the eyes of the author, is deserving of such

careful treatment because it speaks to a larger concern, which, in the case of Sansom, extends to societal history and transatlantic politics, and which, in my case, posits a poetics of ecstasy. And, like Sansom's, this present expression of reflexivity is, to me, the most valuable (and, perhaps, even enjoyable) part of the study.

I attribute the importance to this epilogue of reflexivity to the bald fact that may be read between the lines of Sansom's biography of Auden's ode and my own study of Robinson's metasonnet: Poetry is hard even for those who are most committed to unveiling its mysteries for the rest of us. True, this inference might result in the assertion that poetry is simply *too* hard and, therefore, not worth the effort required to understand, appreciate, and enjoy it. Perhaps. But what I hope the reader comes away with is, rather, the notion that all readers of poetry have a like learning curve with the overwhelming superabundance of poetic artifice and centuries of canonical allusion and lyrical convention that must be reckoned with. Online, one can find a wonderful interview with the poet Richard Wilbur, late in his career, where he speaks of his experience teaching poetry in a creative-writing program for undergraduates (Wilbur). To cull the class enrolment down to a manageable size, Wilbur, with an impish smile, spoke of devoting the first meeting to the mechanics of English prosody, which invariably worked like a charm. Wilbur added that, though he had never actually said these words aloud to a burgeoning class, one might have also done the students a service by warning them of the stakes of the poetry-writing game, remembering that they would be entering the same arena that Shakespeare and Milton had proven their mettle. That Wilbur did not say this, in the end, to his students is a good thing, though, for a certain kind of student, a reminder of the art's possibilities might well serve to inspire. For my part, I began this study in a state of being both inspired by the difficulty of poetry and the extraordinary gifts bestowed by its practitioners, of whom, Robinson, in my estimation, must be considered among the great poets in the American tradition. As mentioned before, I

am not alone in this assessment. Indeed, a striking number of former Poets Laureate of the United States—including Donald Hall and Robert Pinsky—are of the same mind. Yet, curiously, Robinson remains, save the occasional new appearance of a selected poems upon some anniversary of the poet's birth, completely out of print. In this vein, too, Sansom's biography and my study are aligned: The happenstances of history, as much as any intrinsic merit, largely determine the vagaries of a poet's legacy. As one learns from Sansom, for example, not even Auden's steadfast disavowal of the poem could lessen the perennial popularity of "September 1, 1939".

The difficulty of poetry and the mastery of its difficulty might also be thought of as a pair of fighting forms, its own bespoke duplexity that can, in a Janus-like way, both inspire and intimidate simultaneously. As I consider the lessons of this study, foremost in mind are the applications of those lessons towards the project of poetry education for others. Of the ten years that I have spent thinking about, reading for, and writing out this study, what pedagogical concerns do I see and feel most compelled to share? Like Sansom (or Keats amid those realms of Chapman's gold), I, too, have travelled far to file this report. So, now, at the soulful recollection of this educational endeavor, I offer this candid assessment of my process in putting this all together as a prelude to the notes for teachers of poetry following these reflections of learning. Originally conceived, my dissertation was envisioned as a reading of Robinson's late collection of sonnets, published in 1928, focusing on a concept that I thought of then as *dazzlement*, which, as a polysemous word, can reference either brilliance (literal or figurative) or the bewilderment caused by brilliance (literal or figurative). I recall striving to craft a title that would fall neatly into ten syllables (if not five iambs): *The Dazzlement of Robinson's Sonnets*. Robinson's sonnets, to say nothing of his other verse, is rich with the imagery of illumination and its absence; much like the art of Rembrandt, this is a veritable calling card of Robinson's poetics. In the autumn of 2015, I

presented my first proposal for this study—about the dazzlement of Robinson's sonnets—to a group of doctoral students at Tirol, Italy, a picturesque village within walking distance (uphill) of the town of Meran in South Tirol. The presentation was scheduled as the final talk of a one-day conference, which took place in one of the turrets of the thirteenth-century castle of Brunnenburg, the longtime home of Ezra Pound's daughter, Mary de Rachewiltz, herself a poet and literary translator. I was new to Professor Klaus Benesch's doctoral seminar and did not know anyone there; it goes without saying that the site itself—medieval Brunnenburg surrounded by a vineyard in the throes of alpine beauty—was sublime and served to both inspire and intimidate.

What does such an amalgamation of inspiration and intimidation look like? Here's an example. Earlier that morning, having been given a tour of the so-called Pound Room by Mary herself (which boasted such relics as Goethe's signature, which Pound had collected; a handwritten letter from Hemingway in Cuba that included a photograph of himself posing with a caught shark; a letter from James Joyce; a cancelled check to T. S. Eliot; Pound's typewriter; and so on), I sat in the front row of the cramped room in one of the castle's turrets that serves as Brunnenburg's education center. There, Manlio Della Marca, then an instructor in the American literature department of LMU Munich gave a presentation about a group called Casa Pound espousing fascist ideology and seeking to coopt Pound's fame for its political objectives. At some point, Mary came into the room and sat next to me. I was taking notes with my Faber-Castell Elemento, a fountain pen that, given the occasion, was ostentatious but, in my muse-addled mind, seemed, somehow, fitting. When Mary sidled in next to me to listen in on Manlio's presentation on Casa Pound, she had brought with her a piece of paper but no pen. After a couple of minutes, she grabbed my pen without so much as a glance and began taking notes. Now and again, she would return the pen, only to grab it once again. I was secretly thrilled by this, feeling that this extemporaneousness would

somehow add to the mana of the instrument, which, earlier in the year, both Günter Grass and Herta Müller had used in signings at Literaturfest München. At one point in Manlio's presentation, he played a video clip from Casa Pound's YouTube channel, which featured a doctored photograph of Ezra Pound coming to life to perform his infamous radio broadcasts in support of Mussolini. At this, incensed, Mary, with her right hand, which still held my pen, brought her fist to the table several times to punctuate her outrage: "My father was not a fascist!" At that, she dropped the pen and walked out of the room, unmoved by Manlio's protestations. I retrieved the pen and saw that it now featured a prominent nick in its silver cap, which I beheld with "the joyance that a scullion may command" (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 25).

That moment of wonder was not to last, for, as the time for my own presentation neared, I grew anxious. I felt out of place, frankly, among these brilliant new colleagues of mine, most of whom were twenty years younger and all of whom were, unlike me, conversant in the tenets of critical theory and postmodernism; I lamented my penchant for reading seventeenth-century verse and pined for facilities with the philosophies espoused by the likes of Foucault or Benjamin. That I thought of the curtal sonnets by Hopkins as edgy and worthy of delving into with this crowd, vis-à-vis the seemingly more pedestrian poetics of Robinson's sonnets, now seemed ridiculous. In short, among these Americanists of Munich's Latin quarter, I was an odd duck—and being a poet, rather than a scholar, certainly added to the despair of this feeling of displacement. I had certainly hoped for feeling otherwise. Thrilled at the prospect of meeting Mary and visiting Brunnenburg, I had, earlier in the week, made twenty-five sets of photocopies of the entirety of her father's *Cathay*, the 1915 collection of poetry inspired mostly by translations from the Chinese that heralded the era of modern poetry exactly one hundred years ago. All of the copies were with me then in my leather satchel. Though I had envisioned the lot of us performing a choral reading for

Mary in the storied home that she once shared with her father upon his initial return to Italy following his release from St. Elizabeths, I now thought the better of it. The weather was warmer than expected, and the air in the stuffy room where we had spent the day was stale; people were tired and hungry—and, as ever, the conference was running late, which only added to the collective hunger and tiredness. The gustatory carrot that had most of us genially suffering through the day-long program of lectures was the promise of dinner at a restaurant of some renown—Culinaria im Farmerkreuz, which, from its high perch in the mountains, offered a stupendously beautiful vista of Tirol, Meran, and the entire valley whose visual grandeur was heightened by its pairings of prize-winning local wines with Tirolean cuisine. I was the final speaker, and, though the group was eager to get back to the hotel for a spell before heading onward to the restaurant, a bathroom break was called for. Nervous, I needed the facilities badly but was deterred by the long line to the sole water closet in the turret. Someone mentioned there being another toilet on the floor above. This seemed promising. I went upstairs, found the door, and went inside.

Immediately, I knew that I'd entered a private apartment, but, to my relief, there was a bathroom to the right of the front door, and, desperate, I ducked inside to take care of things. Though spartan, the décor was feminine, and I feared the worst. When I opened the door to make a quick exit and head back downstairs for my talk, Mary de Rachewiltz stood before me with her arms crossed and her expression stern: "What are you doing in my bathroom?" My face must have made my apologies, for I was dumbstruck and at a perfect loss for words. I have no idea what I said, but I recall her then asking, "Are you all finished down there?" I told her that I was the last speaker and that I didn't think there would be more than twenty minutes or so needed for that. She nodded. Emboldened, surely, by her softened expression, which now felt plaintively at ease with my transgression, I told her about the copies of *Cathay* in my satchel (stupidly forgetting that copyright infringement

was a worse transgression) and my hope to read the poems aloud as a group downstairs as a kind of celebration of the centenary of the book, wondering whether she might like to join us. Listening to me, she nodded thoughtfully, paused, and said that she had a better idea: We ought to come up to her private apartment, where we could hold the reading and she would serve tea and cookies. Elated, I returned downstairs to share the happenstance of my encounter with Mary and the news that we could read *Cathay* together with her upstairs. To my genuine surprise, the enthusiasm was lackluster—and some looked put out at having to endure poetry on top of an already trying day while forgoing the chance to freshen up before dinner. Undeterred, I made it known that Mary was expecting us afterwards. I then jumped headlong into presenting my plan of research by distributing a photocopied handout consisting of an outline of a couple of sonnets like a grade-school teacher. I proposed to write a dissertation that would plumb the literary effect of Robinson's sonnets that I had detected, which I called dazzlement—the presence of oppositional features of extreme light and utter darkness whose appositions redoubled the effects of poetic artifice. The term dazzlement itself was redoubled, for both the characters in Robinson's sonnets as well as the reader experience a state of dazzlement much in the manner of my own in standing before Mary de Rachewiltz after using her bathroom, a kind of ecstasy, a state of overwhelming affect.

Following my fifteen-minute talk, a spate of hands went up to offer notes. I cannot remember what they were, only that names were dropped of critics whose books I hadn't read. I do recall that one such note—a question, actually, not a comment—whose dramatic power left me so taken aback that I remained all but quiet for the rest of the evening. The keynote speaker was Massimo Bacigalupo, an Italian professor of American literature and a translator and editor of American poetry (Pound, *Posthumous* xvii – xix); he is also a longtime friend of Mary, for Massimo's mother was Pound's doctor in Rapallo. One of the

sonnets of Robinson's that I had read aloud to exemplify my rough thesis of dazzlement was titled "Many Are Called," which deals with the observation by the narrator that poetic greatness seems to be in decline.

Many Are Called

The Lord Apollo, who has never died,
Still holds alone his immemorial reign,
Supreme in an impregnable domain
That with his magic he has fortified;
And though melodious multitudes have tried
In ecstasy, in anguish, and in vain,
With invocation sacred and profane
To lure him, even the loudest are outside.

Only at unconjectured intervals,
By will of him on whom no man may gaze,
By word of him whose law no man has read,
A questing light may rift the sullen walls,
To cling where mostly its infrequent rays
Fall golden on the patience of the dead (Robinson, *Sonnets*, Crosby 70).

In the back of the small room, Massimo's hand shot up, and his voice was sharp: "What does the sestet mean?" I made a comment that the lines seem straightforward and offered my best attempt at a paraphrase that embodied good naturalization (insofar as Forrest-Thomson

uses the term). He didn't seem placated; after a pause, he raised his hand again: "What does the sestet mean?" I rephrased my answer, adding that the stanza seemed straightforward enough—but, again, he wasn't placated, and, at that, the conference ended on a dissonant note as the group reluctantly shuffled upstairs. I brought up the rear and noticed that Massimo went past Mary's front door to the roof. I followed him, and we were both soon bathed in the golden light of dusk with the superlative view of the valley before us. Massimo mentioned that, somewhere, he has a photograph of himself as a boy on this roof—and I offered to take a photograph of him there, which I did. We shook hands and returned to the others, who were now cozily ensconced in Mary's living room, where she had brought out her father's *Cathay* in an assortment of editions and translations. We drank tea and ate cookies and, after Massimo held forth with an introduction that underscored the work as a minor masterpiece of world literature, which rallied the occasion, we read the book aloud, a page apiece, and listened to one another breathe life into the words, whose polyphony, born of Pound's multicultural intertextuality and resounding through our motley voices, was soulful. Afterwards, Mary let us wander about her study, where her father's life mask, along with the chairs where he and Yeats sat all those years ago, facing easterly, and the poet's library of medieval manuscripts brought the full force of its realia to the fore, even more powerfully than the Pound Room that morning had. Alas, too soon, it was time to go—late, we hurried to the restaurant, walking the whole way up a steep incline, to make our reservation. Klaus Benesch, my dissertation advisor, pulled alongside me as we were walking at dusk amid the crisp air. "Mary mentioned you," he smiled. Curious (and somewhat concerned), I was circumspect: "Oh?" "Yeah," Klaus quipped, "she said you had a nice pen."

Dinner was amazing. To this day, I have never had a better meal. Sunset came over the alpine valley, and we were as high up as an airplane, looking down at the valley aglow

with crepuscular gold and dimming into lamplit incandescence. The world grew completely dark, at last, and, from the restaurant's terrace, it seemed as though we were looking down at the stars. I thought of Robinson's sonnets and their dazzlement. I recalled Mary talking about her father and Yeats, which reminded me of a story she had shared earlier in the Pound Room about visiting Robert Frost in the U.S. shortly before he died to thank him for his spearheading the effort to get Eisenhower's Attorney General to release her father from St. Elizabeths—the poetry of poets talking about poets and poetry; a dialogue of dialogue. I thought of Martin Buber, of whose *I and Thou* I first learned about as an undergraduate at the University of Hawai'i at Manoa from a German professor of religion, Fritz Seifert. I was drunk and bedazzled and ecstatic. There, on that terrace, looking down on the world between courses and wine pairings of a great meal, the words first came to me as a flicker, not a flame, and, the next day in Meran—as the others from our carpool group had lunch, toured the city, and hung out at the river—I sat behind St. Nicholas' Church and consecrated my ecstatic dazzlement from the night before as a sonnet.

After Brunnenburg

At Culinaria by candlelight,
intoxicated by the headiness
of *Cathay*'s song and Mary's anecdotes
of Frost and Yeats and all who drank the bright
and polysemous, vintage readiness
expounded in her father's verse and notes,
we toasted what the sestet means—how break-
ing dawn will flood the idyll where we'd read

Li Po and what the Anglo-Saxons said
of faring from the fountain-fortress wake
and how his silent mask from life would ache
to shed the shackles of its desk-bound bed
to join us in the journeys now ahead
and pen the dazzling music they will make (Olival-Bartley, "Brunnenburg").

As our crowded van made its circuitous way home to Bavaria, I fiddled with the language of the poem, playing with punctuation and word choices. Marking up the prosody, debating enjambments, I began to notice what I would now describe as the poem's duplexities, which, though composed unwittingly, now seemed to call attention to themselves with the unnuanced ring of clanging rhymes. At first, the lexical pairs of imagery caught my eye (*candlelight*, *dawn*; *intoxicated*, *toasted*; *silent mask*, *dazzling music*) but then I noticed the poem's duplexities of syntax as well (*by candlelight*, *by the headiness*; Cathay's *song*, *Mary's anecdotes*; *to shed*, *to join*). Though the reversal of the usual order of the octave and sestet was assuredly intentional, I noticed how, unwittingly, the poem's single sentence is also sententially contorted, for the subject of the sentence doesn't appear until the beginning of the seventh line. All this complemented what little I recalled from Helen Vendler's *Art of Shakespeare's Sonnets*, that the words tethered by end rhymes afford a kind of dialogue between them not unlike that of the vehicle and tenor of a metaphor. The cognitive dissonance between the two is charged, as Pound might say, thickening and condensing the language until it palpably reflects Einstein's equation of mass as energy—and, leading to a stream of consciousness born of this tethering (be the coupling imagistic, lexical, phonological, metaphorical, or syntactic), this creates dialogue. And this poetic echo of dialogue that resounds from the duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue of poetic artifice—

which reverberates continually in the mind of the reader even having moved on to another line—explodes to effect, with layer upon layer of dialogue thickening the condensation and energizing the mass, of a state of poetic ecstasy in the reader, resulting in a feeling of being dumbstruck or a sensation of being overwhelmed by the sensual and intellectual dazzlement of lyrical art. Using such declarative language to describe what I mean by poetic ecstasy seems ineffectual here. Perhaps what is called for is a metaphor, a duplexity to illustrate this poetics of ecstasy.

Though certainly not the sort of recollection of a poem one is normally inclined to share, I think this memory might crystalize what I mean here by poetic ecstasy, whose onset, I postulate, is born of duplexities of poetic artifice that explode into dialogue. Decades ago, at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, I took a number of undergraduate courses in writing poetry—I recall a workshop with Eric Chock, a kama‘aina poet given to free-verse reminiscing of childhood themes that celebrate Hawai‘i’s cultures of immigration. I also recall another workshop with Faye Kicknosway (who later changed her name to Morgan Blair), a free-verse poet and visual artist from Michigan whose work is grounded in Dadaist art and Surrealist poetry, a twofold interest that informed our reading list as well as her writing pedagogy. (Once, she presented us with a paper bag full words and phrases cut out from magazines and newspapers from which we were to grab a handful and write a poem using only what we could find in that serendipitous bounty.) I recall, too, a third undergraduate poetry workshop there with Rob Wilson, whose interests in issues of the postcolonial Pacific and love of the Beats lay at the heart of his prose poems. None inspired me, for their work lacked what I desired most from the art; their pedagogy, too, was less text- and student-centered than I had hoped for. I longed to know more about the workings of poetry and the methods of its greatest practitioners. I recall feeling particularly despondent about how my poetry was received by these teachers and also how their poetry,

in turn, was received by me. I was in my twenties when I first reflected on these workshops, and I recall one evening in those days walking to Kailua Beach after school and work, wanting to clear my head while feeling the wind, listening to the waves, and watching the play of moonlight on the water. In my messenger bag, I had an anthology that featured a cutal sonnet by Gerard Manley Hopkins that I admired.

Pied Beauty

Glory be to God for dappled things –
For skies of couple-colour as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls; finches wings;
Landscape plotted and pieced – fold, fallow, and plough;
And áll trades, their gear and tackle and trim.

All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise him (P. Levin, 146).

I read the poem, and, while reading, discreetly removed a glass pipe from a Ziploc bag packed with a bud of pot. Ensuring that no one was nearby, I took a hit, and—feeling the wind, listening to the waves, and watching the moonlight on the water—read the poem again. Hopkins' self-proclaimed sprung rhythm felt sprung indeed to the instruments of my

mouth and ears. The discrete points of articulation, working in concert, felt singly charged and sprung—my lips, my tongue, my larynx, my uvula, my nose, my lungs, my esophagus, and even my teeth (the incisors, of course, but also the canines and molars) were sensitive to the variegated resonances of percussion in the poem aloud, vibrating and stopping and sounding again. And those sounds, too, fell into an array of duplexities—consonants and vowels, simple consonants and consonantal clusters, schwas and diphthongs, nasals and glides; assonance, alliteration; and those exquisite sibilants, voiced and unvoiced. I succumbed to the pleasure the music of the poem lent; I felt I could almost taste its orthography, whose curious punctuation made for exotic spicing. I recall marveling at the effects of the hyphen and en dash in terms of prosodic speeding up and slowing down. And, those *dappled things*, Hopkins diction, especially the apposition of those alliterative and antonymic adjectives in the penultimate line—"swift, slow; sweet, sour; adazzle, dim" (146)—brought me to the realization sad realization of the divide in my courses at the English Department, with old-school verse promulgated as literature worthy of study but free verse proclaimed as the sole means of poetic creativity. There was an undeniable power to the aesthetic design of "Pied Beauty" that I felt was carried aloft by the recognition of these pairings (to say nothing of the lowered affective filter encouraged by the THC), not least that of the simultaneity of doubt and faith (Friedman 80). Sitting in the cool sand, I thought of Walt Whitman's "On the Beach at Night" (Whitman 398), which led me to think of the shoreline setting of "Out of the Cradle Endlessly Rocking" (388). My mind reeled through remembered and imagined catalogues of Whitman's origin story of becoming a poet through song, its refrains of musicality (through sound, lexis, and syntax). His story of those two birds amid an Arnoldian unplumbed and estranging sea that brought him to the profession of poetry felt prescient.

A decade ago, I stood before the paired-off eagles of Franz Marc's *Kämpfende Formen* and came to the epiphanic moment whose sudden onset and perfect unexpectedness echoed that long-ago reading of Hopkins' "Pied Beauty"—and I still remain thunderstruck by how poetic artifice triggers such avalanches of aesthetic experience. That same year, while writing "After Brunnenburg" in Meran behind St. Nicholas' Church (and nursing a hangover from the dinner at Culinaria), the imposter syndrome from the day before as I presented my early notes on Robinsonian dazzlement—with "What does the sestet mean?" then still ringing in my psychic ears—was trenchant. So, I decided, once home in Munich, to buttress the impressionistic certainty that I sensed in these poetic matters by reading those selfsame critics that my well-read, younger peers in the doctoral seminar bantered about with such facility. Throughout these years, between that autumn day in 2015 and now, in the spring of 2024, I read hundreds of books. I read a veritable library of Robinsonia, including the collected poems, letters, memoirs of others, biographies, appreciations, dissertations, and even three bibliographies of his work and others about his oeuvre. My proclivities as a sonnettomaniac were ascendant, and I read every sequence, anthology, and poetics that I could find about the form. I steeped myself in literary theory, finding resonance in works of existentialism, New Criticism, structuralism, poststructuralism, and most especially in semiotics and Russian formalism, particularly the work of Bakhtin, Jakobson, and Lotman. I reached out to poets who had written of Robinson, including Robert Hass, Robert Pinsky, W. S. Merwin, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, and, most profitably, Donald Hall, whose correspondence evolved into an epistolary friendship that brought a letter every other week to my Munich mailbox. My letter-writing extended to Mary de Rachewiltz and Massimo Bacigalupo, both of whom I now consider friends. Mary kindly invited my wife Laura and I to tea at Brunnenburg on two occasions, both of which were every bit as memorable as the one recounted in the sonnet. Mary put me in touch with Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whose

appreciation for Robinson illustrates how poets can, and should, read as they purport to write, with an open mind and, in the spirit of Donald Hall's "Goatfoot" essay, a body ready to encounter the lyrical work of art. In 2024, Massimo and I had lunch with Klaus Benesch here in Munich to celebrate Klaus' retirement, where we recalled the what-does-the-sestet-mean question with, I daresay, fond remembrance. I share this because it underscores how these I-It relationships evolved into I-Thou relationships, which, in turn, underscores how dialogue is at the heart of this poetics of ecstasy. Dialogue makes art possible, for it makes duplexes of poetic artifice reverberate, like ripples from a cast stone, *ad infinitum*. Dialogue, which demands being invested in the outcome of engagement with the other, is what transmogrifies simplicity into complexity; it's also what returns that complexity into a reflexive and newly-informed simplicity. Inevitably, this sentiment deserves the echo of Eliot's sagacious truism:

> We shall not cease from exploration
> And the end of all our exploring
> Will be to arrive where we started
> And know the place for the first time (Eliot, "Four").

Originally, I conceived that this study would merely delve into an observation made about a particular poet, E. A. Robinson, and a particular form of verse, the sonnet. Early on, book-length studies of individual poems like *My Emily Dickinson* by Susan Howe, *The Long Public Life of a Short Private Poem: Reading and Remembering Thomas Wyatt* by Peter Murphy, and, of course, *September 1, 1939: A Biography of a Poem* by Ian Sansom found their way into my ken, and the examples of their deep engagement—that is, dialogue—with a reader toward a reckoning with a single poem impressed me immeasurably. That this

approach complements the philosophy of dialogue at the heart of Martin Buber's *I and Thou* is serendipitous. As to the choice of poem, Robinson's metasonnet, his sonnet on the sonnet, was the only one that I seriously considered for marquee role. At the time, I was under the impression that sonnets remained the butt of jokes, as in a recent *The New Yorker* cartoon featuring Shakespeare with his muse, who sits next to her birthday cake, opening her present, quipping: "Oh. Wow. Another sonnet." (Spaulding). Indeed, when I initially shared my idea for this study with Klaus, he prudently encouraged me to seek another genre: "How about fiction? Poetry can be bad for one's career." He was right, of course, as the professional interests listed in the faculty directory of every English Department makes clear, but I was determined, though I veiled my churlishness with humor, "That ship has sailed: I'm a poet." To be sure, it was Klaus' perceptiveness and generosity that allowed for a crucial change in my approach to this study when he encouraged me to write from my own experience as a poet to bring a degree of authenticity to the project. Klaus was also generous not just in terms of subject and approach but in time as well. Like Milton, who escaped the plague in London to hole up at a country estate reading in preparation for his epic, I, too, holed up during the COVID-19 pandemic to read sonnet anthologies, sonnet theories, sonnet histories, and too many primers titled *How to Read a Poem*. The works cited that concludes these pages only hints at the readerly peregrinations made.

It was while coming to the realization that sonnets were decidedly not a joke but instead a literary concern whose sudden vogue hinted at the popularity the form must have enjoyed during the 1590s in London that I formulated the question that, even now, near the end of this dissertative study a decade in the making, remains, in part, unanswered. It was during a conference at Johns Hopkins University on the sonnet that I mused, at the outset and conclusion of my fifteen-minute presentation (which was delivered online due to the COVID-19 lockdowns), "Given the superabundance of linguistic information and poetic

artifice in a sonnet, how is one to read (let alone teach) the form?" Centuries of sonnets ought to prepare the teacher of poetry or literary history for this, but I don't think they do—at least, not in the conventional sense. The short answer—or, rather, the linguistically appraising answer—is that, even in the relatively brief, finite form of one hundred forty syllables, the information, especially in light of this inquiry into what the duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue of a poem might bear, is never-ending. Assuming that lexical and thematic resonances and allusions will demand additional reading and study—as how, say, reading Rossetti's metasonnet might inform a reading of Robinson's—this suggests that information in a given poem that might otherwise seem straightforward or innocuous through a stand-alone reading might, in fact, demand the reading of another text to, like a key, unlock its metapoetic meanings. At the time of the conference, I was convinced that nothing short of a lifelong study of poetry could be offered as the pedagogical ideal. This, after all, is what has always served as the education of poets, including Milton, Whitman, and Robinson. Next, the final essay of this study will address the question that challenged my intentions to codify the lessons drawn here of the duplexic, dynamic, and dialogic natures of poetry. Though I once assumed that any serious attempt to learn the art of poetry, including the art of reading poetry, would necessarily demand an impossibly substantial body of knowledge to be apprehended beforehand, I see things otherwise now.

> I propose that we "play" with [poetry]. I use the word with several associations that maintain its active, transitive sense. We play poems as we play pieces of music. We play poems as we play games. We play poems as we play parts in plays. All these things that we play involve objects made by someone and taken up by someone else (let's say by us) who activates them according to some explicit or implied instructions for the sake of some kind of enjoyment (Bialostosky 5).

In the revised edition of *How to Read a Book*, Mortimer J. Adler and Charles Van Doren add a note to the first appendix in the book, which offers a recommended reading list for the lifelong study of the so-called *Great Books of the Western World*, saying, in effect, that, while one can learn to read the masterpieces of prose, from Aristotle to Joyce, through self-study, poetry is otherwise: "Since reading lyric poetry requires special skill, we would also recommend any of several available handbooks on the subject—for example, Mark Van Doren's *Introduction to Poetry*, an anthology that also contains short discussions of how to read many famous lyrics" (Adler and Van Doren 350). Aside from the shamelessness of the plug for the co-author's brother's primer, what is notable is that, coming from a book that advocates turning to primary sources and reckoning with difficult texts by oneself, poetry is perceived, though composed of the same linguistic and rhetorical building blocks as prose (i.e., words, phrases, clauses), to be an outlier, of such challenging complexity that especial help is required. As noted earlier (in "Literacies of Style"), this perception of poetry has primed the market for handbooks like Van Doren's. (A quick aside: Mark Van Doren wrote an insightful study of Robinson that was published by The Literary Guild of America in

1927, the year before the latter's collected sonnets appeared, wherein he noted: "[Robinson's] distinction lies in the subtlety with which he has indicated the delicate balance which the universe seems to preserve between good and evil, between day and night, between light and dark, between beauty and deformity, between music and noise" (M. Van Doren 32 –33).) The general thrust of such books is to bolster the confidence of the reader by defining terms and illustrating their usage with lyrical examples. This is the approach of Babette Deutsch's still serviceable *Poetry Handbook: A Dictionary of Terms*; written in the same vein is Edward Hirsch's *The Essential Poet's Glossary*, which was published in 2017, sixty years after Deutsch's own.

Don Bialostosky's *How to Play a Poem*, also published in 2017, in tandem with three other handbooks of poetry—John Hollander's *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse*, Adam Sol's *How a Poem Moves*, and Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style*—are primers that can serve the needs of both the beginning reader of poetry as well as the experienced enthusiast through a pedagogy grounded in the tenets of dialogue. In my estimation, Queneau, Hollander, and Sol (to list them chronologically), intimate and exemplify what Bialostosky articulates explicitly, which is that poetry is a form of elevated play in writing, which follows that its enjoyment (including, implicitly, its understanding and appreciation) is also a form of elevated play through reading. It ought to be mentioned at the outset that traditional books, rather than electronic facsimiles, for all the reasons addressed earlier (in "Literacies of Style"), should be favored. Though each of the four texts to be introduced has been tailored for slightly different readerships, all recognize the importance of play in bringing to life the text of a poem, which is by way of saying that all apply a philosophy of dialogue in their pedagogical approaches to poetry; and, though each is intended to facilitate the reader's reading of poetry, the reflexivity between reading and writing assure that all might well serve equally in the creative-writing classroom.

Raymond Queneau's *Exercises in Style* takes a simple story—the narrator witnesses an altercation between passengers on a bus and, later, sees one of the passengers talking with someone else—and retells the same story ninety-nine different ways. For example, one telling of the story is told in the present tense, another in the past tense; another version is told as a sonnet and yet another as a haiku. The effect of reading these iterations back-to-back affords the induction of a story's working parts, the measure of form, lexicon, metrics, and style. Like the celebrated prompts in the appendix to John Gardner's *The Art of Fiction: Notes on Craft for Young Writers*, Queneau's *Exercises in Style* are sketches (to use the parlance of the artist) or experiments (to use that of the scientist). Queneau's project summarily does away with the facile argument of many contemporary poets that form is dead. In this, *Exercises in Style* serves in practical application to complement the theoretical history delineated in Steele's *Missing Measures*. In reading through Queneau's formal experiments, it is well-nigh impossible not to apprehend at once how restrictions or amplifications of language (say, through lexis or meter) alter the readerly experience of the story. Additionally, the collected appositions allow the reader to let the interplay between the pairs of retellings throw into greater relief the functions and efficacy of variations of poetic artifice toward a poetics of ecstasy.

Similarly, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse* by John Hollander is both a pedagogical compendium and literary exemplum. Hollander, who spent his career at Yale University at the time of Paul de Man and Harold Bloom, offers, in fewer than one hundred and fifty pages, a metapoetic anthology to introduce the forms and patterns possible in English verse. Hollander's notes on Hopkins' sprung rhythm, which, in "Pied Beauty," had taken me to such heights that night on Kailua Beach all those years ago, are, indeed, composed in sprung rhythm, just as his explanation of Skeltonics is penned in Skeltonics. From the repetitive structures of verse (like the villanelle or sestina) to comical schemes

(such as the limerick or double-dactyl) to rhetorical devices (including the epic simile and chiasmus), Hollander uses the form to illustrate the form, allowing the form of poetry to marry the content of poetics reflexively (and wittily), redoubling their singular powers as fighting forms. This creative take on the primer demands close reading (and re-reading) along with intellectual play, allowing the reader to decipher each form and, thereby, glean its lesson first-hand. I first encountered the book as a freshman in college, and, now, in my mid-fifties, I still relish the wit and erudition on every page. In addition to supplementing the self-reflexive verse with cogent definitions in prose, Hollander also includes an appendix of metapoetic examples by others throughout literary history that complement this instructional design. So, here, the reader encounters, for instance, the metasonnets of Wordsworth, Keats, Rossetti, and Robinson. Hollander's comment on the poem that we have spent so much time reading is, though but a sentence, an apt reminder of poetry's—and, in particular, the sonnet's—need to be read allusively and against the touchstones of its fighting forms: "Edwin Arlington Robinson's sonnet echoes both Keats and Rossetti in theirs, although making manifest the relation of maker and thing made, of burden and reward" (Hollander 78 – 79). Hollander's first edition was published in 1981, in which the introduction included this lamentation for the pressing need of the present guide of what is fast becoming lost knowledge:

> Both verse and prose, then, are schematic domains. Literacy used to entail some ability to write in both modes, without any presumption of poetry in the execution of the former. But today sportswriters on the few newspapers we have left know no Latin nor can write good witty verses. We no longer memorize poems at school. Young persons are protected from the prose cadences—so influential on writing in both modes—of the King James Bible

> by aggressive separatism and the churches themselves; all of us are shielded from Shakespearean rhythm by the ways in which both prose and verse are publicly intoned in America. The territory covered in this guide—this road map through the region of poetry in English—has itself tended to run back into second-growth timber, if not wilderness" (2).

Hollander is certainly speaking to the choir, though he may as well, in light of the revolt against meter chronicled by Timothy Steele in *Missing Measures* and the hegemony of digital distractions chronicled by Sven Birkerts in *The Gutenberg Elegies*, be howling at the moon. Can such a literate and impassioned guide be mere folly? True, in the more than four decades since *Rhyme's Reason* was published, poetic literacy—indeed, literacy at large—has only waned, but, then again, the fact is that Hollander's book has remained in print, and the fourth edition was published in 2014. Interest, in short, abides. A final thing to say about *Rhyme's Reason* is the book's extraordinary straddling of diverse readerships, for it can be profitably read by the nascent versifier or the longtime writer in form. Having been both, I can readily attest to this, continuing, as I do, to regularly dig into my own yellowing copy with a newcomer's interest.

How to Play a Poem by Don Bialostosky and *How a Poem Moves* by Adam Sol, were published in 2017 and 2019, respectively. Bialostosky, a poetry scholar who has made a career of reading the verse of William Wordsworth dialogically, is the author among these four that, for the teacher of poetry (or the teacher needing to teach poetry), I see as the most valuable in its delineation of a pedagogy that champions the reader's role in co-creating the text with the poet. In this way is poetry play: The poet and reader encounter one another dialogically in the way that the I meets the Thou on Buber's narrow ridge. Bialostosky has also written a major theory of composition studies—*Mikhail Bakhtin: Rhetoric, Poetics,*

Dialogics, Rhetoricity, published in 2016—whose applications, especially where Bakhtin and Buber find common ground through a dialogism, are made manifest in *How to Play a Poem*. Save for an insightful afterword that brings to bear the philosophical hardware, the book is jargon-free and can be recommended to any teacher of poetry for use in either literature or creative-writing courses. Adam Sol's *How a Poem Plays* follows a neat and effective strategy in allowing readers the freedom to play with poems: Each short essay in the collection, running about four pages apiece, begins with the words "How a Poem"—as in "How a Poem Puts Skin on a Mystery," "How a Poem Shapes Memory," "How a Poem Makes Meaning with Music". Each essay also offers a reading of a single poem, which is partially reproduced in the text, making it, after a fashion, akin to the present study's singular focus. This, in language that is readily accessible for the poetry novice and stand-alone chapters, is an excellent text for an introductory class. Whereas Bialostosky's *How to Play a Poem* is more for the teacher of poetry (as well as the serious student), Sol's *How a Poem Moves* is more for the undergraduate student, especially as a reader to supplement Hollander's *Rhyme's Reason*, which served as a text in 2016 for an undergraduate course at LMU Munich that I taught titled "The Patterns and Forms of Poetry". The students, I recall, found the book not only helpful but playful as well.

Yet, the elephant in the room cannot be ignored: Play or no play, the hard truth is that Chaucer was right when, with the very first line of *The Parliament of Fowls*, he so eloquently fashioned his complaint: "The lyf so short, the craft so long to lerne"—the Middle-English formulation of *ars longa, vita brevis* (Chaucer 310). There is no end to the learning demanded of the poet or, for that matter, the reader of poetry, which is why re-reading poetry bears such sweet fruit. Primers such as Ezra Pound's *ABC of Reading* that amount to anthologies rely wholly on the reader's inducement to learn the principles of poetics seem, however well-meaning, misguided. As Milton's and Robinson's hand in hand

tropes illustrate the Buberian concept of I-Thou, books, such as these four, that take into account that dialogical encounter is at the heart of the art of poetry are what is needed today, especially in the newfound world of artificial intelligence. For it to take hold and continue beyond the classroom, study and inspiration, preparation and play, must walk hand in hand. Another facet to Chaucer's lamentation is that poetry, in addition to familiarity with other poetry, demands a sensitivity for language or, at the very least, an understanding of the principles of composition, which, in turn, demands knowledge of the mechanics of language production and reception. My own embarrassing history might serve as a warning: I confess that I did not learn how to explain the distinction between the present perfect tense and the simple past tense until my early thirties when I was studying to become an English teacher to speakers of other languages. I suspect that—for native speakers of English, anyway—this may not be all that uncommon. (Turning to my family, here's another such humbling: I recall writing an e-mail to my brother, Kevin, who had asked me to review the abstract of his dissertation at Columbia University, saying that it was perfect "just omit the comma before the preposition in the first sentence". He wrote back, thanking me, and asked, "By the way, what's a preposition?") In *The Art of Fiction*, John Gardner also reminds writers that, at the outset of their apprenticeships, to eschew jazzing around and diving headlong into the deconstructive deep end of narratology (Gardner, *Fiction* 82 – 94). Just as one masters algebra before calculus, so should the literacy of prose precede poetry. In any case, the need for a pedagogy of play exists for both.

This study of poetic ecstasy and the roles that duplexity, dynamics, and dialogue play in its onset began with a description of a work of art, and, in the spirit of this thesis of redoubling, it seems fitting to close on a like note. In December 2023, my wife, Laura, and I visited the East-West Center in Honolulu on the Manoa campus of the University of Hawai‘i with a friend to see a fresco made by Jean Charlot, titled *Study, Inspiration, Creativity*. The

large work depicts two giant hands and, between them, a ball of fire. Beneath the hands and flames, at lower left and right, are two hooded figures, the personifications of Study, who is reading, and Inspiration, who is writing. Creativity, in this visual allegory, is the esemplastic role that humankind has in melding Study with Inspiration. The Promethean blaze is Creation, and the hands, at work and play, are its human Creators. Standing before the work, I felt as deeply moved as I had years ago at the Pinakothek der Moderne looking at Marc's *Kämpfende Formen*. Looking at the fresco, I recall thinking of how both works—made in 1967 and 1914, respectively—were created during times of war (Charlot; Marc). I also recalled lying in my childhood bed and using the streetlight on the wall for the shadow play of an eagle, folding and unfolding my hands to make it fly. I had seen this fresco in my early twenties when I worked as a student desk clerk at Hale Kuahine, a residence hall on the site of the East-West Center, where I myself had a room. Adjacent to the dormitory is the immense building that houses the fresco, my favorite work of architecture, the Imin Conference Center by I. M. Pei. Behind it are the Seien Japanese Gardens. I have always thought of the two in tandem—the airy concrete of the pavilion and the stream-trickling verdancy of the shaded space. It was while working there as an undergraduate more than thirty years ago that I first encountered Buber's *I and Thou*, back when I was taking those poetry classes with Eric Chock, Faye Kicknosway, and Rob Wilson. Looking at the fresco intently, I could not help but see the twin pairs before me—the hands, the figures—as an ekphrastic confirmation of an utter haunting. I saw what Buber saw in the Doric column and what Auden saw in the affirming flame. The aquiline shapes of Creation echoed Eliot's rose-cum-fire, and their pyromancy of dazzlement was this: To pursue the poetics of ecstasy, read fighting forms as loving.

German Summary

Wie bei der Gestaltung eines Haiku ist diese Dissertation in drei Teile gegliedert. Die Lektüre von Poesie als Ekstase, die ein eigenes Trivium darstellt, beginnt mit der Idee der Duplexität, wie sie Franz Marc eingangs in seinem *Kampfende Formen* illustriert. Dementsprechend untersucht der erste Teil dieser Dissertation, wie Duplexität in poetischen Texten rezipiert und gelesen wird. Ähnlich wie Duplexitäten in den Naturwissenschaften, etwa in der Biologie oder der Physik, sind sie im alltäglichen Sprachgebrauch – man denke nur an Phrasenverben oder zusammengesetzte Substantive - in der Lage, durch Verletzung der Symmetrie dynamisch neue Formen zu schaffen (z.B. „hot“ und „dog“ versus „hot dog“). Als sprachliches Konstrukt ist Poesie reich an Duplexitäten. Ihre Präsenz zeigt sich insbesondere dort, wo durch poetische Kunstfertigkeit sprachliche Effekte wie Alliteration und Reim erzeugt werden, die, wie Pound sagt, das Kennzeichen von Poesie, nämlich sprachliche Verdichtung, ausmachen.

Der zweite Teil dieser Doktorarbeit ist dann der Beschreibung der Dynamiken von poetischen Duplexitäten gewidmet. Duplexitäten poetischer Sprachkunst besitzen, so mein Argument, das Potenzial, beim Lesen eines Gedichts dynamisch neue Formen zu entfesseln. Die Qualifizierung des Wortes „Potenzial“ ist hier wichtig. Wie Wolfgang Iser behauptet, meint es hier vor allem den ‚Geist‘ des Lesers, der in bestimmter Weise auf einen, ästhetischen Text reagiert. Dieses Modell aus der Rezeptionstheorie will dabei keinesfalls die wichtige Rolle des poetischen Textes selbst schmälern; vielmehr fällt diesem dabei die Aufgabe zu, dem Leser lexikalische Anregungen für die Auseinandersetzung mit dem Gegenstand zu geben oder auch, um mit Bashos Frosch zu sprechen, ihm/ihr zu erlauben diese nicht zu beachten. Kollokationen oder Idiome, zum Beispiel, sind von Duplexitäten gekennzeichnet, die in der semantischen Praxis zu überraschend eindeutigen Bedeutungen

führen. Da jedoch alle LeserInnen ein bestimmtes Lexikon, bestimmte Erfahrungen und eine bestimmte Wahrnehmung von Welt mitbringen, ist jedes Lesen eines Gedichts einzigartig. Dies gilt selbst, wenn poetische Texte wiederholt gelesen werden. Ein derart ‚dynamisches' Lesen, etwa von Bashos Haiku oder Pounds Couplet, bricht die Duplexität des Textes auf und macht damit erst ästhetische Erfahrung möglich.

Im dritten Teil dieser Arbeit wird schließlich die philosophische Dimension von Poesie untersucht. Es geht dabei besonders um die Rolle des Dialogs, wie Martin Buber es nennt, zwischen Rezipient und Text und um dessen Potential, hierdurch neue poetische Formen zu schaffen, Formen die u.a. eine ekstatisches Erfahrung beim Leser/in auslösen können. In seinem Buch, *Ich und Du*, erklärt Buber bekanntermaßen, dass alles wahre Leben Begegnung ist. Solche Begegnungen, die so genannte Ich-Du-Beziehungen bilden, können zwischen scheinbar asymmetrischen Paaren entstehen – etwa zwischen einem Menschen und einem anderen Menschen, aber auch zwischen einem Menschen und einem Tier, einer Pflanze oder sogar einem Kunstwerk. So seltsam es klingen mag, man könnte zum Beispiel Franz Marcs *Kämpfende Formen* in gewisser Weise als Ko-Autor dieser Dissertation begreifen, denn sein bildnerische und textliches Werk hat mir die Idee zu der hier vorgestellten Theorie von Poesie souffliert, die ich wie ein Flüstern zwischen Vertrauten Seelen wahrgenommen habe.

Der Dialog ist also neben der Duplexität und der Dynamik die dritte Antriebskraft, die es dem/der Leser/in von Gedichten erlaubt, bei der Lektüre eine Art Ekstase zu empfinden und in ein Zwiegespräch mit dem Gedicht einzutreten. Dies bedeutet, dass die Ich-Du-Beziehung des Lesers zum Text, ein entscheidender Faktor dafür ist, wie ein Gedicht erlebt werden kann. Um diese Theorie nicht nur abstrakt darzustellen, versucht die Dissertation dem Leser/in möglichst konkrete Begriffe an die Hand zu geben, mit denen die Lektüre poetischer Texte beschrieben und begriffen werden kann.

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