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A linguistic analysis of Emily Dickinson's poetry

Mary Ann Hobson

A LINGUISTIC ANALYSIS OF EMILY DICKINSON'S POETRY

A Thesis

Presented to the

Faculty of

California State College,

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In Partial Fulfillment

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in

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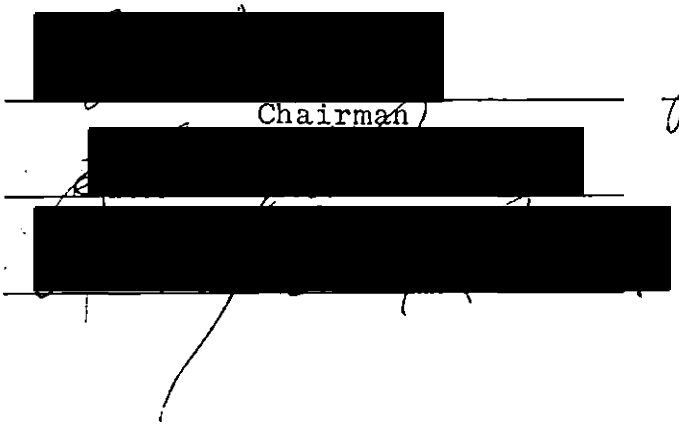

ABSTRACT

Given the idea that poetry is an organism in which a hierarchy of mutually dependent linguistic and rhetorical elements, from the smallest phonemic one to the largest syntactical-clausal one, interact to produce a characteristic "ethos," I have chosen to analyze several poems of Emily Dickinson in which one or more of the elements in this hierarchy is outstanding--producing a dramatic effect upon the whole poem.

The specific approach I have taken in this analysis includes the theories of Roman Jakobson on phonemic sound-shape, and also the combined work of the authors of A General Rhetoric, which transcends Jakobson's work, integrating the disciplines of semiotics, linguistics, rhetoric and poetics. Also included as part of the analytic approach is the work of Noam Chomsky, whose transformational-grammatical theories of deep structure/surface structure uncover interesting possibilities for poetic designs in parallelism, ellipsis and pronominalization.

The outcome of this thesis is the realization that for poetry to "work" it must have effective rhetoric, it must bring to the surface of the text processes such as parallelism, pronominalization, ellipsis, and all the variations, additions, suppressions and substitutions--all the transformations of the symbol which help to bring

languages into existence and particularly poetry into existence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION. 1

POEM #89. 18

POEM #370 29

POEM #122 34

POEM #673 50

POEM #712 56

POEM #1670. 63

POEM #1700. 74

SYNTHESIS 81

BIBLIOGRAPHY. 83

We play at Paste -
Till qualified, for Pearl -
Then, drop the paste -
And deem ourself a fool -

The Shapes - though were similar
And our new Hands
Learned Gem-Tactics -
Practicing Sands

This poem was one of four which Emily Dickinson enclosed in her first letter to T. W. Higginson, postmarked 15 April, 1862.[1] As it was her way of introduction to her future mentor, it is my way of introducing a discussion of her poetry. Emily Dickinson was very much aware of the power of language to create playful sound shapes. She exploited the possibilities that existed in poetry to create "gems" out of the constituent anatomies of sand. One might say that Emily Dickinson understood how language works, the tactics involved.

Yet even though Emily Dickinson might have used the word "tactics" to define her own art in the past, such a functional term might have spirited debate among Cratylun critics who would have argued against its rather sterile "conventionality."[2] But my contention is that if poetry

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[1]Thomas H. Johnson, The Poems of Emily Dickinson, Vol. I-III (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1963) p. 245. (All selected poems taken from the three vol. series cited above.)

[2]Gerard Genette, "Valery and the Poetics of Language," in Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post Structuralist Criticism, ed. Josue V. Harari (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 360-361.

has any meaning at all as language, it must have a function. Consequently, a linguistic focus provides the essential framework for probing the interrelationships of poetry's meaning and function--of understanding its language, which, according to Noam Chomsky, would fall in the realm of "mysteries." He calls "mysteries" those issues in the study of language and Mind "that remain as obscure to us today as when they were first formulated," as opposed to what he calls language "problems"--issues "that appear to be within the reach of approaches and concepts that are moderately well-understood."[3]

Still, one might argue that a linguistic discussion of poetry, for example in its phonological aspect, risks abstracting away from the really profound semantic questions intrinsic to "the creative aspect of language use," as Chomsky puts it. Yet Chomsky, himself, refutes this argument within the same passage by creating an analogy with physics:

> The significance of physics does not derive from the intrinsic interest of its subject matter; no one cares what happens under the exotic conditions of physical experiments, apart from the relation to physical theory. Physics is significant, applications aside, because of its intellectual depth, and if it were to turn out that the principles of phonology are considerably more sophisticated and intricate than those of semantics, that they enter into nontrivial

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[3]Noam Chomsky, Reflections on Language (New York: Random House, 1975), p. 137.

> arguments to explain surprising facts, that they give us more insight into the nature of the organism, then phonology will be a far deeper theory than semantics, despite the more limited intrinsic interest of the phenomena with which it deals.[4]

Given the idea of poetry as an organism, how does one uncover poetry's "surprising facts" to make real Chomsky's speculations? But more importantly, how does one reverberate some of Chomsky's basic ideas of the interrelationship of Language and Mind--through the poetic vehicle? The following concepts of his Reflections on Language, while providing an element of diachronicity to present-day linguistics research by reviving some of the basic ideas of seventeenth century rationalists, also provide an illuminating glimpse into my foregoing rhetorical questions by "hinting" at the process of metaphorical creation whereby man construes himself and his world:

> The eye perceives, but the mind can compare and analyze, see cause-and-effect relations, symmetries, and so on, giving a comprehensive idea of the whole with its parts, relations and proportions.[5]

Elsewhere, Chomsky mentions the specific relational concepts that seventeenth century rationalists had stated, such as " ... Proportion and Analogy, Equality and Inequality, Symmetry and Asymmetry,"[6] concepts to be revived and

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[4]Ibid., p. 83.

[5]Ibid., pp. 6-7 (Chomsky quotes Cudworth).

[6]Ibid., p. 7.

rephrased by Roman Jakobson, the most noted espouser of a relationship between the two disciplines of poetics and linguistics in recent years, and whose research on poetic sound-shape forms the basis of this present study.

In his "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," delivered as part of the Conference on Style in Language at Indiana University in 1958, Roman Jakobson closed the twain between the two disciplines, linguistics and poetics, forever:

> All of us here, however, definitely realize that a linguist deaf to the poetic function of language and a literary scholar indifferent to the linguistic problems and unconversant to linguistic methods are equally flagrant anachronisms.[7]

As early as 1958, Jakobson had been concerned with the relationship of poetics to linguistics, and he realized "poetics deals with problems of verbal structure, ... [and] since linguistics is the global science of verbal structure, poetics may be regarded as an integral part of linguistics."[8] Yet he needed to refute the notion that "poetics, in contradistinction to linguistics, is concerned with evaluation," the separation of the two fields based on what Jakobson referred to as "an erroneous interpretation of the contrast between the structure of poetry and other types of verbal

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[7]Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics," Style in Language, ed. T. A. Seboek (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1960), p. 377.

[8]Ibid., p. 350.

structure: the latter are said to be opposed by their "casual" designless nature to the "non-casual," purposeful character of poetic language."[9] Yet as Jakobson pointed out, "Any verbal behavior is goal-directed, but the aims are different and the conformity of the means used to the effect aimed at is a problem that evermore preoccupies inquirers into diverse kinds of verbal communication."[10]

Thus, it was necessary to place poetry within the context of all language before any kind of serious analysis of its processes could be undertaken. The key words were factors and functions.

The factors of language, according to Jakobson, can be perceived in any act of verbal communication. There are six factors, each of which serves a different function. So before one can discuss poetic function, it is necessary "to define its place among the other functions of language."[11]

The factors reproduced below from Jakobson's schema will make the discussion easier to follow, and will, moreover, be referred to throughout the paper as they are applicable to the particular poems of Emily Dickinson.

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[9] Ibid., p. 351.

[10] Ibid.

[11] Ibid., p. 353.

Context
ADDRESSER——Message——ADDRESSEE
Contact
Code

These factors correspond to a scheme of functions:[12]

Referential

Emotive — Poetic / Phatic — Conative

Metalingual

The poetic function, as can be observed, corresponds with the Message itself. But according to Jakobson, "this function cannot be productively studied out of touch with the general problems of language, and on the other hand, the scrutiny of language requires a thorough consideration of poetic function."[13]

Jakobson's empirical linguistic criterion of the poetic function is then definitively offered as an answer to his own general speculations:

> In particular, what is the indispensable feature inherent in any piece of poetry? To answer this question we must recall the two basic modes of arrangement used in verbal behavior, selection and combination. If "child" is the topic of the message, the speaker selects one among the extant, more or less similar nouns like child, kid, youngster, tot, all of them equivalent in a certain respect, and then, to comment on this topic, he may select one of the semantically cognate verbs--sleeps, dozes, nods, naps. Both chosen words combine in the speech chain. The selection is produced on the bases

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[12] Ibid., p. 357.

[13] Ibid., p. 356.

> of equivalence, similarity and dissimilarity, synonymity and anonymity, while the combination, the buildup of the sequence, is based on contiguity. The poetic function projects the principle of equivalence from the axis of selection to the axis of combination. Equivalence is promoted to the constitutive device of the sequence. In poetry, one syllable is equalized with any other syllable of the same sequence; word stress is assumed to equal word stress, as unstress equals unstress; prosodic long is matched with long, and short with short; word boundary equals word boundary; no boundary equals no boundary; syntactic pause equals syntactic pause, no pause equals no pause ... [14]

Similarity and contiguity. Suddenly a world of reiterative shapes and sounds, a synaesthesia, envelops you. The whole history of poetics rings with such phrases as Caesar's laconic cry to Victory, "Veni, Vidi, Vici," or the political slogan, "I like Ike," or more pointedly, the opening line of Emily Dickinson's poem, "We play at paste," wherein similarity has operated on contiguity; wherein the bilabial voiceless plosives have combined with equivalent tense vowels to create a monosyllabic sequence which resolves in your mind. That's poetry--That's play. That's what Emily Dickinson called it, and two decades after Jakobson's lectures on linguistics and poetics, and in the closing of his illuminating text, The Sound Shape of Language (1979), that's what he calls it, too. In fact, the following paragraphs synthesize his poetic theories and bring the science of linguistics up to the present, with an

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[14] Ibid., p. 358.

invitation to the future to resurrect the Saussurian vision.

> The tension between two structural principles--contiguity and similarity--permeates the whole language. If, as mediate building blocks of meaningful entities, the distinctive features serve to connect sound and meaning by virtue solely of contiguity, the inner sound symbolism peculiar to these features strives to burst forth and to sustain an immediate similarity relation, a kind of equivalence between the signans and the signatum. Besides the conventional thesei relations, such a direct semantization of the sound shape comes into play.
>
> And it is precisely "play" and the mythopoeic transforms of language which help to dynamize the autonomous semantic potential of the distinctive features and of their complexes. Poetry, as a purposeful, mythopoeic play, is the fullest universal accomplishment of the synthesis between contiguity and similarity.
>
> The analysis of the two closely interconnected synthetic powers of poetry--that of similarity and contiguity and that of selection and combination is a burning task faced by our science. Any fear of or reluctance about the analysis of the poetic transformation of language impairs the scientific program of those linguists who, in treating poetry, pull back from the innermost problems of language.[15]

Susanne K. Langer had suggested as early as 1942 that the language of poetry has enjoyed a longer history in the evolution of language forms than perhaps any other aspect of language use. Particularly in the lyric poem are our atavistic selves rekindled; for the lyric poem more than any other genre depends upon:

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[15]Roman Jakobson, The Sound Shape of Language (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press), p. 236.

> the fullest exploitation of language sound and rhythm, assonance and sensuous associations ... on pure verbal resources--the sound and evocative power of words, meter, alliteration, rhyme, and other rhythmic devices, associated images, repetitions, archaisms, and grammatical twists. It is the most obviously linguistic creation, and therefore the readiest instance of poesis.[16]

As the above quotation suggests, a treatment of the whole poem involves the dynamic interrelationships of all the linguistic phenomena. So besides phonemic sound-shape as a tool of an analysis, the intertwined problems of grammar, as well as tropes and figures must be considered. In considering these aspects of poetic composition as well, one considers "both aspects of language, the ordinary and the poetic, the two copresent and coacting universals familiar to the human being from his first linguistic steps."[17]

In dealing with the former, namely grammatical syntax, I will be applying some of the ideas of Noam Chomsky's original theories as espoused in Language and Mind, which, when applied to the surface structure of the poem, can provide a ready example of the following deep structure phenomena: ellipses, parallelism, and pronominalism.

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[16]Susanne K. Langer, Feeling and Form (New York: Scribner, 1953), p. 258.

[17]Roman Jakobson, The Sound Shape of Language, p. 222.

In dealing with the language phenomena of tropes and figures as they are operative in the poetry, I will be drawing from a work entitled A General Rhetoric, which has been recently translated from the French by Paul B. Burrell and Edgar M. Slotkin. A General Rhetoric draws heavily on the linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure, Louis Hjelmslev, Emile Beveniste, Roman Jakobson and others, thus integrating linguistics, semiotics, and poetics with rhetoric as a traditional discipline.[18]

Whereas Jakobson had considered the counterpart of the message factor in language communication to be the poetic function, the authors of A General Rhetoric consider it to be the rhetorical function. Keeping in mind that by "language" is meant "the total linguistic phenomenon, of which language in the Saussurian sense is only one factor," the authors of A General Rhetoric, though agreeing with Jakobson's notion that the message is "a proper reality," nonetheless refute his notion that it is only one factor among others in the communication act. The authors suggest that:

> ... The totalizing character of the message comes from its rhetorical function, which is itself transcendent in comparison with the

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[18]Group μ, J. DuBois, F. Edeline, J.-M. Klinkenberg, P. Minguet, F. Pire, H. Trinon, A General Rhetoric, tr. Paul B. Burrell and Edgar M. Slotkin (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981), front flap of book jacket.

> other functions of language. The rhetorical intention, in fact, completely disturbs the functioning of the different aspects of the linguistic process. In the first place, it acts in a radical manner on the code--it is there, in fact, that the traditional theory of figures has been working for a long time and which in the broadest sense the present essay would like to systematize rigorously, that is, the procedures by which the language of the rhetor transforms the conventions of language in their three aspects: morphological, syntactical, and semantic. But the relationship of the message to the referent--whatever might be the interpretation given to "referent"--may itself be modified without the prescriptions of the code being violated.[19]

In view of A General Rhetoric's reformulation, if you will, of Jakobson's schema, what actually is the relationship of the rhetorical function to the poetic function? An attempt to answer this complex question simply would be to simply quote what A General Rhetoric concludes toward the end of its introduction to the text--that the one is the prerequisite to the other:

> As we believe we have shown adequately in the preceding pages, we can say that there is no poetry without figures so long as "figures" is understood in a broad enough sense; that is every literary message includes by necessity rhyme, rhythm, assonance, proportion, intersections, oppositions, and so on. But there are also obviously figures without poetry, and it is on this score that the debate continues.[20]

The next step towards an understanding of how rhetoric relates to poetics takes one into the sphere of what

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[19] Ibid., pp. 17-18.

[20] Ibid., p. 20.

A General Rhetoric calls the "aesthetic consciousness." Its study of formal structures of a work goes beyond mere pedagogical exercises of naming elements and assigning categories to them. The true value to such an approach would have to include how such an interpretation of elements becomes expressive; in other words, the quality of the aesthetic response.

Certainly the present study of Emily Dickinson's poetry is interested in the poet's expressivity, and the particular aesthetic quality of it. How then, does one arrive at an understanding of what it is to be "expressive"? How does one arrive at an understanding of a particular "style"?

These questions are answered at length in A General Rhetoric.

First of all, a return to Aristotelian Poetics provides the critic with the term, "ethos," which is defined as:

> ... an affective state raised in the receiver by a particular message and whose specific quality varies as a function of a certain number of parameters. Among them a large place is reserved for the addressee himself. The value of a text is not pure entelechy but a response of the reader or hearer. In other words, the latter is not content to receive an intangible aesthetic datum but reacts to certain stimuli. And this response is an appreciation. In physiology, sight and hearing are not the "virtue" or "properties" that the ancients believed they had defined but the response structured by an

> organism subjected to certain physical stimuli that may be described objectively. Like sight or touch, the effect depends at the same time on the stimuli (the metaboles) and on the receiver (reader or hearer).[21]

The so-called "style" of a work would be appreciated, first of all, by the addressee, who in a very real sense recreates the work in his own synaesthetic participation of it. From this first perception can be expanded three others on which style is dependent: the synchronic, the diachronic, and the contextual phenomena of the work itself. The diachronic element places the work somewhere within the range of historical values from precise literary genres, socio-historical milieu, etc. A General Rhetoric cites six such components. The synchronic element asserts the work as a composition of varying patterns of specified units. The two elements together, the diachronic and the synchronic, work to establish the "autonomous ethos" of the work. Apart from these two phenomena, there lies the contextual one, which, to borrow Paul Imb's suggestion, represents style in the form of a nested hierarchy:

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[21] Ibid., p. 154.

Style--of a group of languages
--of a language
--of an epoch
--of literary genres; style proper to certain subjects
--of a school or literary milieu
--of a writer
--of a moment in the life of a writer
--of a work
--of a part, a paragraph, a movement, etc., of a work
--of a sentence

> Therefore, each level constitutes a type of text, is the creator of a norm, orienting to an effective realization all the autonomous ethoi that are developing at a lower echelon.[22]

Both the kind of contextual understanding of texts suggested here, by such a hierarchy, and that already suggested by Michael Riffaterre[23] help one arrive at what the authors of A General Rhetoric term:

> A picture of the text as a space where the aesthetician is to study the multidimensional webs of interdependence, of correspondences, of syntagmatic or paradigmatic relations that have been established among the different metaboles, ending finally in the creation of contextual effects.[24]

Finally, there is one more aspect of this present study that has yet to be questioned in this introduction--the message itself. Why Emily Dickinson's poetry for a linguistic analysis? The answer, to me, seems to be an

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[22] Ibid., p. 162.

[23] Michael Riffaterre, "Syllepsis," Critical Inquiry 6 No. 4 (Summer 1980): pp. 625-638.

[24] Group μ, A General Rhetoric, p. 162

obvious one. Emily Dickinson's poems have everything language has.

In approaching the work of Emily Dickinson, I have chosen poems which span the entire canon; there has been no attempt to demonstrate a chronological linguistic development, or a thematic organization of linguistic ideas like Brita Lindberg-Seyersted in The Voice of the Poet.[25] But rather, to explore the poetry's essential sound shape, and thereby illuminate its polysemic language, from the smallest phonemic unit to the largest syntactic-clausal one. While keeping in mind that in any one poem the hierarchy of elements is involved in a complex web of interrelationships, I have nonetheless chosen for analysis poems in which one or more of these integrating elements is outstanding--that is dramatized on the poem's surface structure. Thus, polysemism becomes the vehicle for understanding other interrelated concepts, rhetorical ones for example, as in poem No. 89 where antithesis and anastrophe function within lines and down stanzas to hint at an unspoken referent suggestive of the enigmas of life, death and immortality. The result is a language paradox. Polysemism can also descend the linguistic hierarchy from lexical to phonemic categories in poem No. 370, wherein the distance established between

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[25]Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, The Voice of the Poet (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968), p. Preface.

the signifier and the signified is added and equated through phonemes metonymical to the ontological ideas expressed by the latter. Reascending the linguistic hierarchy again, poem No. 122 allows one to probe the interrelationships of grammar and syntax which form such rhetorical figures as anaphora and chiasmus, variations of verbal harmony that dramatize the poem's evolving sound shape. In poem No. 673, sound symbolism itself provides yet another area for probing poetry's meaning and function. In fact, sound symbolism together with metrical structure give to the poem alternating spatial qualities of expansiveness and diminution, proximity and distance. Spatiality can also be explored in the poem, "The Chariot," No. 712, wherein semantic elements supplying the poem's kernel essences create visual pauses that are then passed, consumed, transcended or transformed within the poem's evolving architecture. Levels of semantic symbolism operate in yet another poem, No. 1670, to obscure the addresser/addressee relationship. Of course, this blurring of what turns out to be genre categories is appropriate--for this poem is a "Dream." Finally, in the light of Chomskian transformational/grammatical theory, the polysemism of poetry can be illuminated from one more point of view--grammatical/syntactical ambiguity. In this case, one sees how multiple meanings can simultaneously arise from a core meaning on the poem's surface structure.

In all of the above cases, except for one (No. 712), the poems chosen for analysis have heretofore received little critical attention or have otherwise not been among those chosen to fill the pages of poetry anthologies. Nonetheless, they remain "gems." Consequently, as the foregoing analysis proceeds, the reader will see each poem as it functions in a procession of small-rarified gems, to paraphrase Susanne Langer's description of the particular quality of the "pure" poetry of the imagists, impressionists and symbolists. Moreover, he will see the poems evolve through the dynamic interplay of mutually independent linguistic and rhetorical elements, allowing himself to be recreated anew through the experience of the Metaphor.

Poem #89

In the following poem Emily Dickinson exploits the concepts of similarity and contiguity in evolving her particular antithesis phonemically, metrically, and lexically. As an approach to the analysis of this poem I would like to suggest that Emily Dickinson takes the concept of antithesis a step further by creating patterns of opposites both within lines and down stanzas and, moreover, by forging antitheses between apparently incompatible categories of abstract and concrete.

Poem #89

Some things that fly there be-
Birds-Hours-the Bumblebee-
Of these no Elegy.

Some things that stay there be-
Grief-Hills-Eternity-
Nor this behooveth me.

There are that resting, rise.
Can I expound the skies?
How still the Riddle lies!

Of all of the poems of her canon which express abstract concepts, Emily Dickinson attempts to relate to these areas along the lines of concrete human experience. Yet, concrete terms often lack opposites, so the poet's antithetical treatment of the concept of immortality demands abstract opposites which present what A General Rhetoric refers to as "common semes with an acceptable isotopy." A common example would be a citation from Gautier, "The sky is black, the earth is white," the

common sense seme being the "simultaneous and contiguous presence of sky and earth in the same countryside." Yet A General Rhetoric further suggests that antithesis is often more complex than the above example. The effect is different in this example: "Chinese ink is black, snow is white." Here, there are also two hyperboles in opposition. Antithesis is, then, "the result of two hyperboles, neither of which modifies the sense of the words, but both of which, as well as the resulting antithesis, play on the deviation suspected between the referent that is not to be lost sight of and language that adds to a description of realistic intent occasional semes.[26] In this case the unspoken referent is "stillness." It becomes the meeting point of "Some things that fly," and "Some things that stay," of those that "rest," and those that "rise."

The first lines of the first two stanzas of the poem function on the principle of anastrophe, which not only reverses the interior order of sentence elements, but suggests a change in their respective functions. In the case of this poem, the subject "things" actually reassumes dominant position in lines one of the first two stanzas; whereas a return to normal word order would have caused the subject to be neutralized in the existential sentence beginning with the expletive "There." It is clear, then,

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[26]Group μ, A General Rhetoric, pp. 141-142.

that at the outset of the poem the poet is attempting to establish a concrete structure, a reliable working place. Yet, immediately, and in keeping with Dickinson's patterns of contraries, the concrete gives way to the abstract as the infinitive of the verb "be" immediately establishes the world of the poem as timeless and ubiquitous. In his "Preface on Procedure," to Emily Dickinson's Poetry, Robert Weisbuch comments on the poet's polysemic vision:

> But this is only one form of a compound vision that is itself compounded of many kinds of attempts to make experience whole. Dickinson's is equally a compound vision in that her poetry contrasts and sometimes, remarkably, combines a self which is powerful, autonomous, and godlike with a self which is all-vulnerable, limited, and victimized. And it is more than a compound vision in that Dickinson's best poems simultaneously create a world and respond to that creation as if it were a given. The response itself may be double- or triple-minded; 'tis compound vision and compound witness at once.[27]

A return to the poem will reveal yet another tension which is created metrically by its iambic pentameter scheme (the most common and traditional scheme in English poetry) which attempts to establish a conventional atmosphere. It would appear that metrics would aid a counterpoint to syntactics. Even though the subject matter be set in a timeless arena beyond human powers of symbolization, nevertheless, the poet's attempts to come to grips with the

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[27]Robert Weisbuch, Emily Dickinson's Poetry (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1972), p. xii.

abstraction become a necessary present process; therefore the iambic pentameter reinforces her concrete beginning.

However, the second and third lines of the poem begin to belie linguistic contiguity as prose-like syntax gives way to poetic deviation wherein words are deleted from the surface and one is left with kernel essences:

> Birds-Hours-the Bumblebee
> Of these no Elegy

Indeed, the ellipsis, as a kind of "permutation of segments of the sentence has a value for the eye." As the writers of A General Rhetoric have observed:

> They attract the eye to the text as spatial order and not simply as temporal or causal order ... certain ones make us think of verbal architecture. But the figures of permutation are not the only ones under consideration. Symmetry and chiasmus, repetition and meter, enumeration and parenthesis--all the processes that depend on the order of words--aim at making a space for language, making language be seen.[28]

The particular verbal architecture in line two of the poem is achieved through a process of complete suppression, whereby the information remains complete, moreover, because of the parallelism of the construction, the linguistic phenomenon innate to language, which Noam Chomsky has detailed in Language and Mind, and one of the principles

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[28]Group μ, A General Rhetoric, p. 162.

of universal grammar which allows the poet once again to "make strange"[29] the familiar.

Therefore, according to Chomskian Linguistic theory, there are three propositions or ideas being stated here, and the ellipses provide the "sphere of new perception" for the observer. By filling in the ellipses, moreover, the ideas can be stated explicitly:

> There are Birds, and there are Hours,
> and there is the Bumblebee.

In addition, Roman Jakobson's theory of phonemic metonymy would assert equivalencies in the sound properties of each of these three propositions--the "r" and "s" of "Birds" being re-echoed in "hours"; the "b" in "Bumblebee" re-echoing the "b" of "Birds." Also, phonemic equivalence is reinforced syntactically, as all three words are nouns.

Poetic tension is created metrically, moreover, as the poet sets up equal stress expectations in the two spondaics, in "Birds" and "Hours," only to be frustrated in the dactylic "Bumblebee." The falling rhythm of "Bumblebee" in the second line creates a tension whereby the poet's attempt to make concrete the things that "fly," is met with dissonance, a sadness, a note of pessimism. It is the same note of pessimism that T. S. Eliot strikes through sound and

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[29]Victor Shklovsky, "Art as Technique," in Russian Formalist Criticism: Four Essays, tr. Lee T. Lemon and Marion J. Reis, ed. Paul A. Olson (Lincoln/London: University of Nebraska Press, 1964), p. 4.

and meter in "The Waste Land" when

> All the women come and go talking of
> Michelangelo

or when in "Dover Beach" Matthew Arnold recovers a similar tone in "Sophocles Long Ago." However, in Dickinson's example, it is even more emphatic as the spondaic beginning, which momentarily creates a sense of permanence and stability, is quickly followed by disintegration in the falling rhythm of the dactyl of "Bumblebee."

The last line of the first stanza gives evidence of syntactic deviations, ellipses, of the expectations set up by the first line of the poem. If the ellipses are replaced, one discovers a basic parallelism in lexical and syntactic properties.

> Of these (things) no Elegy (there be).

In addition, in the third line we find phonemic and metrical confirmation of the syntactic elements as phonemic equivalence exists in the repetition of the (th) cluster, and the line returns to the conventional iambic meter. Moreover, the rhyme scheme pattern of the entire stanza reveals itself to be exact. So, despite the hint of uncertainty offered by the variation in metrics in the second line, there appears to be an overriding sense of poetic faith expressed through the rhythmic, syntactic and phonemic features of the first stanza.

As suggested in the introduction to this poem, its

overall rhetorical structure is antithesis through equivalence. With this framework in mind, one can proceed to stanza two which begins syntactically the same as stanza one--a paratactic statement followed by two hypotactic ones.

In this stanza, however, there is semantic antithesis in the expression of those things which "stay":

Grief-Hills-Eternity

Again the meter begins as iambic pentameter, but varies in line two to become two spondaics followed by an iambus. The things that "flew" in stanza one are now harmonized into the scheme of things by "eternity." The gathering together of elements under the consumate idea of eternity is in fact reinforced by the phenomenon of syllepsis, in this case the use of the singular pronoun in the third line of stanza two instead of the plural:[30]

Nor this behooveth me.

Moreover, the variation of the metrical scheme across the horizontal axis is counterpointed by the exact rhyme scheme down the vertical axis, with phonemic equivalence established across the horizontal axis in the "be" sound of "behooveth." So the pattern grows.

Finally, in the last stanza, the timelessness set up by the ubiquitous infinitive of the first two stanzas

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[30]Group μ, A General Rhetoric, p. 27.

is now a confirmed present tense verb:

There are that resting, rise.

It is also important to note that the first line of the last stanza has returned to the normal syntactic word order of the existential sentence, a variation of the form with which Emily Dickinson begins some thirteen poems of her canon. In her illuminating article, "Hide and Seek: Emily Dickinson's Use of the Existential Sentence," Elizabeth F. Perlmutter makes some interesting points that help to resolve the tensions that the poem establishes semantically, syntactically, metrically, and phonemically thus far:

> In Dickinson's poems, with existential sentences, experience is broken down into a system of metaphors based on the conceptual relations between location, state, substance, and boundary. Such subjective phenomena as feelings, hopes, fears, intimations, and recognitions become properties of "things," or particulars that can be "located," characterized, and thus fixed forever on the map of experience. Indeed, Dickinson's world becomes populated with particulars, in that the phenomena described in the existential-sentence poems become curiously animate ... They become certainties in a world composed of bits and pieces, violent changes, and unstable selves. The single, unique existent possesses a certain intelligence beyond the grasp of the human mind.[31]

When one follows the poem closely, it becomes

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[31]Elizabeth F. Perlmutter, "Hide and Seek: ED's Use of the Existential Sentence," Language and Style, 10:2 (Flushing, N.Y.: Queen's College of the City, University of New York, 1977), pp. 109-119.

apparent that there is no subject in the first line of the last stanza. The ellipsis of the true subject seems to follow the development of the poem where "extents" both fly and stay, wherein the entire poetic structure seems to alternate between stability and disintegration before the eyes of the poet; the fact is that contraries of permanence and stability are resolved in the unspoken existence that the poet can, indeed, be certain of. Thus the poem continually renews its mysterious meaning through increasingly compressed metaphors of the poet's acquired self. Yet, in keeping with the human need to qualify essences, the unspoken subject is qualified in a relative clause that does in fact recapitulate, lexically and phonemically, the antithesis established in the first two stanzas, and is the poet's last concerted effort to come to grips with the experience of the poem--after that is expressed a sense of resignation, a new "I," and the final metaphor that embraces the entire poem. The correspondences are thus:

"resting" -- "things that stay"
"rise" -- "things that fly"

The "I" of the poem, having engaged in an interior monologue and debate with her own rhetoric of the previous stanzas, asserts herself anew in a final refutation and/or confirmation of her own uncertainty by inverting the poetic declaratives of the first two stanzas with an interrogative:

Can I expound the skies?

And with that rhetorical inversion, one has yet another example of antithesis as it operates organically in the poem.

Yet rhetorically, tension is again created in the response, which is not a declarative, but in fact an exclamation which remains rhetorically independent of the question:

How still the Riddle lies.

In his "Closing Statement: Linguistics and Poetics," Roman Jacobson discusses language forms which frustrate prescribed language functions, thus producing the type of rhetorical tension cited above by suggesting that the syntactic forms language may take set up certain expectations specific to non-poetic functions such that a declarative sentence or statement can be questioned as true or false, whereas an imperative which focuses on the addressee cannot, nor can an exclamatory or purely emotive statement which focuses on the addresser of the message, and is often phatic in content.[32]

Finally, the last stanza of the poem, in contradistinction from the first two, is comprised of three paratactic statements, each of which is rhetorically separate, yet poetically unified. All three lines end in identical

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[32]Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics," pp. 354-355.

rhyme down the vertical axis, while across the horizontal axis, each is metrically, iambic trimeter. So one could say that, in a language sense, Emily Dickinson has achieved a paradox; in the last stanza of the poem what one is left with is indeed a Riddle.

In his discussion of T. S. Eliot's "Four Quartets" in Metaphors of Self, James Olney says that Eliot " ... like Jung, like the Dutch painters, incorporates into his poem a perspective contemplation of the methods, processes, techniques of his art, and he provides a sort of double perspective ... "[33] which does not so much summarize meaning as constantly renew it as a process in becoming. Emily Dickinson has certainly continued this diachronic pattern. For as this poem and many others of her canon confirm, she creates pictures within pictures to express an interior vastness that is as tenuous as the metaphors that express it, and must, therefore, appear and disappear before one's eyes.

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[33]James Olney, Metaphors of Self (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1972), pp. 274-275.

Poem #370

In the following poem the diachronic and synchronic elements of language "play" come together even more dramatically than in the previous poem, as the poet rekindles the tradition of Shakespeare, Milton and others who exploited the double nature of the English language. Therefore, in her attempt to come to grips with the abstract, Emily Dickinson:

> ... narrows the defining comparisons from the abstract Latinities "Capacity" ("/Heaven is/vast-as our Capacity-) and "Idea" (As fair- as our Idea-") to an unadorned, forceful "here" ("No further 'tis, than Here-").[34]

Poem #370

> Heaven is so far of the Mind
> That were the Mind dissolved-
> The Site-of it-by Architect
> Could not again be proved-
>
> 'Tis vast-as our Capacity-
> As fair-as our Idea-
> To Him of adequate desire
> No further 'tis, than Here

A superficial analysis of the poem reveals "Heaven is" as the kernel idea, to which synchronic and diachronic phenomena act as qualifiers. In keeping with Emily Dickinson's need to locate experience and define extents, the adverbial qualifiers of line one, stanza one, see Heaven as an "extent" and a "condition," exprssing a

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[34]Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, The Voice of the Poet, p. 98.

spatial definition of Heaven as so far, yet so near. The second stanza operates from the first as a series of further definitions of the abstractions adduced as parallel(s) to make real to the poet what Kher might qualify as a "Landscape of Absence."[35]

A look at the second stanza reveals a series of definitions as the ellipses will show:

[It is] as vast as our Capacity-
[It is] as fair as our Idea
To Him of adequate desire
No further [it is] than Here-

The parallelism of "is-ness" replaced into the surface structure of the poem makes clear the kind of symmetry which is at the heart of harmonious expression, and which in this case solidifies the meaningfulness of the evolving ideas. A General Rhetoric discusses the nature of Harmony as it focuses attention on the Message function of language:

> Harmony is, then, seeking a goal foreign to simple, effective communication and aiming to focus attention of the message by granting privilege to the expression. For this reason, the processes of harmony are without doubt figures. The most elementary of these is symmetry. Symmetry is the repetition, in a way that is to be perceived of a certain syntactic sequence. Therefore, it adds structure to whatever structure the ordinary sentence had. It can also be simply something like a balancing of parts of the sentence ... There can be found in the works of prose writers sentences in which feet can be scanned as iambic pentameters or derivatives. But, as soon as the harmony of the

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[35]Inder Nath Kher, The Landscape of Absence (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), p. 48.

> sentence is established as a norm or habit, new deviations may be formed, here again by comparison with the first figure.[36]

And elsewhere, in discussing the philosophical possibilities of repetition to suggest an ontological framework, A General Rhetoric reinforces Emily Dickinson's particular expressiveness in rendering abstracts as substantives, with attributes which can be further broken into their polysemic, phonemic constituents:

> Like hyperbole, repetition can "enlarge" the event, can "augment" things. It can also add semes and phonemes, but it marks above all the distance established concerning the referent, which it treats as a sum of ontological units to which language adds supplementary units.[37]

With this added idea in mind, a return to the poem will reveal some interesting phonemic and metric phenomena. If one substitutes "heaven" for the word "mind" in the second line of stanza one, one gets the kernel idea of "Heaven" "dissolving" in the first stanza, of breaking up into its constituent elements or qualities. But the second stanza metonymically recreates the hypothetically dissolved "Heaven" by reconstituting the qualities that make up heaven and are phonemically equivalent to it. Thus the poet, through her art, "adds and equates" qualities that have phonemic equivalencies to the word "Heaven," which

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[36]Group μ, A General Rhetoric, p. 68.

[37]Ibid., p. 141.

Jakobson would agree are metonymical to it.

"Heaven" is "vast," and the voiced labiodental spirant, "v," echoes the "v" of "Heaven"; it is also "fair," wherein one has the re-echo of the "v" of "Heaven" in the unvoiced labiodental spirant, "f," followed by the "shwa" sound in the "ai" of "fair" echoing the "ea" sound of "Heaven." Next is added the voiceless stressed breath spirant "H" of "Him," which is the first sound of "Heaven." Finally is the "en" of "Heaven" echoed in the word "than" that precedes "Here," and where the vocalic sounds are interestingly reversed, such that the last two words of the poem, "than Here," are phonemically in opposition to the two syllables of "Heaven"--'Hea,' 'Here,' 'ven,' 'than.' So is the hypothetically dissolved "heaven" resolved by the end of the poem in the "here" of the poem itself.

In this poem paranomasia creates a mirror structure like Poe's "raven"/"never" in which polysemism arises out of rhetoric's intrusion into prescriptive grammatical categories. An adverb, "Here," along with "than," which can function either/or both as a preposition or an adverb, and a noun, "Heaven," change function to express apparent time and movement, areas hitherto delimited within verbal tense structure. Thus the paronomasiac function creates progressive and regressive movement between the two cited elements --the stasis finally achieved in the emphatic present of "Here." Yet, "Here" ironically leaves the poem with the

cynical undercurrent of the mereness of Metaphor in the end.

Poem #122

In the previous poem, #370, Emily Dickinson "adds and equates" sound shapes to arrive at a reconstituted "Mind" and "Heaven." The result of this process is an identity of self as a mirror image of the sum total of discrete extents, each of which normally functions as an adjectival or adverbial qualifier of a more concrete sensory datum. As Glauco Cambon suggests in The Inclusive Flame:

> Inner space is an infinity to be sensed in its outer reflection as an external space ("The Outer- from the Inner/Derives it's Magnitude--" No. 451), and eternity can be experienced as ecstatic space ...[38]

"Ecstatic space." When Emily Dickinson's poetics strikes positive cords, it is indeed "ecstasy" which infuses her spatial imagination. In the following poem, #122, sounds vibrate a tune to an unspoken referent that "solemnizes" the voice of the poem. In fact silence and stillness are the images which most closely attain to the harmony of the spheres wherein the singular "summer's day" participates. Yet, paradoxically, in silence is the poem almost dissolved, and the poetic faith of the persona almost lost in a sea of syllables.

An analysis of the following poem will reveal, therefore, an alternation between stability and instability,

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[38]Glauco Cambon, The Inclusive Flame (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 1963), p. 39.

a phenomenon that will express itself, moreover, in the interdependent interaction of linguistic elements.

Poem #122

A something in a summer's Day
As slow her flambeaux burn away
Which solemnizes me.

A something in a summer's noon-
A depth-an Azure-a perfume-
Transcending ecstasy.

And still within a summer's night
A something so transporting bright
I clap my hands to see-

Then vail my too inspecting face
Lest such a subtle-shimmering grace
Flutter too far from me-

The wizard fingers never rest-
The purple brook within the breast
Still chafes it's narrow bed-

Still rears the East her amber Flag-
Guides still the sun along the Crag
His Caravan of Red-

So looking on-the night-the morn
Conclude the wonder gay-
And I meet, coming thro- the dews
Another summer's Day!

Recalling the analysis of poem #89, the motif of "stillness" balanced movement and stasis as it created, through antithesis, an "unspoken referent," which became a compressed metaphor for the entire poem. In the following analysis of poem #122, the motif of "stillness" operates again, but this time more dramatically, as seen through the poem's surface structure.

In analyzing the syntactic structure of the poem,

one notices that the ellipsis includes the crucial "to be," the copula, or verb of essence. This syntactic deletion underscores the semantic intent of the ineffable something that is "of summer" which the poet is trying to express, but which eludes her and is in fact silent.

The poem is divided into seven stanzas, the first three forming independent paratactic statements, the last four being a series of hypotactic ones. The uneven stanzaic division itself suggests the persona's relative insecurity in respect to the essences themselves. In fact, if one looks at the voice of the "I" of the poem, it is but subtly intrusive, taking a subordinate position in respect to the particulars of the summer's essence. The progress of the unrealized self is thus syntactically projected into the evolving architecture of the poem: the "I" is not what one sees first.

To continue the analysis of the poem on a syntactic level, one discovers evidence of parallelism in the ellipses (There is) in the first lines of the first two stanzas. As discussed in the analysis of poem #89, "There is" introduces an existential sentence, and perhaps a thematic introduction to the poem as evolving towards essence. But an exploration of the present poem discovers that for the persona to realize essence, the persona must first experience all the particular essences of the thing to the extend that he is able to really see it, and the poem has really shaped it.

The rhetorical importance of the anaphora, "A something," which begins the first two stanzas, cannot be underestimated, because repetition, a natural language property, allows for the necessary variation which will create the richness, and therefore the understanding of the symbol. So Dickinson, as symbol monger, varies the pattern by inverting "a something" in the third stanza, where it occupies the second line position instead of the first. This inversion provides an element of surprise to the reader, as the pattern of expectation set up by the poet in the first two stanzas is suddenly disturbed. Furthermore, stylistically, this variation underscores the intensity of the extent to which the persona has realized the essence, having now progressed through the particulars of "day," "noon," and into "night." Moreover, there is metonymic equivalence of the idea of extent established through the first three stanzas in the morphemes "still" and "so," both adverbs functioning across the horizontal axis to answer the question, "to what extent."

So far the syntactic analysis of the poem reveals a rhetoric of growing intensity through anaphoric variation. This is the evolution of the poem down the vertical axis, or diachronically. However, there is also synchronic augmentation going on across individual lines, or horizontally in the poem. An example would be line two, stanza two, "A depth-an Azure-a perfume." Besides being a perfect example

of ellipsis, offering three separate and parallel propositions with "It is" deleted, the line also establishes three appositives which metonymically establish on a lexical level what the poem is establishing thus far on a syntactic, clausal level: that is Dickinson's attempt to adduce the "something" by an accumulation of "things."

The meaning continues to "grow" through the interaction of mutually dependent elements.

The last four stanzas of the poem operate on the rhetorical principle of hypotaxis. The first line of stanza four begins with the subordinate conjunction "then." Stanza four will be found to be the most crucial stanza of the poem, as the essence of summer risks disintegration and loss semantically, phonemically, and metrically, at the hands of a perhaps too scrutinizing poet-observer.

The syntax of line one, stanza four, offers some interesting ambiguities, as well. Is this an opening of an imperative, followed by a subjunctive, or is it a declarative, an ellipsis established in the first person pronoun (I) in "Then (I) vail my too inspecting face."? The choice between these two options offers two semantic interpretations. Certainly, the former expresses more intensity than the latter would. As Jakobson says in Style in Language, the imperative and vocative are the clearest examples of language focusing on the addressee. The further ambiguity being, Whom is she addressing? God? the "is-ness" of

summer? The polysemism arising from the ambiguous sentence structure is clearly evident here. The nature of literary texts can be truly polysemic, particularly in the case where something has been deleted from the surface structure, and can therefore lead to more than one interpretation. The present case expresses the synchronic realities of the addressee, an unformulated symbol which eludes the poet, and the consequent existential interpretation of an unrealized addresser who needs to experience the symbol to achieve essence.

It isn't too far-fetched to assume, then, that the voice in the poem might be expressing both the incantatory function to an unformulated symbol as suggested above, and also the declarative, the ellipsis, of the "I" again expressing the unrealized essence in the speaker himself.

Then, in the fifth stanza, the poem returns to a more assertive declarative tone. The anaphora, lines one and two, "The wizard fingers," "The purple brook," and the reappearance of the intensive adverb of extent "still chafes," all contributing to the emphatic tone. Further emphasis is created in the repetition of the prepositional phrase, "within the breast," which parallels with line one "within the night," both syntactically, grammatically, and rhythmically, night and breast being nouns, and the final 't' of both creating a consonantal half rhyme. Semantically, the thought that is being impressed at this stage

of the poem's evolution is that we are deep within the night and the "is-ness" of summer is still there.

The sixth stanza continues the nocturnal passage as the first line establishes an anaphoric pattern with line three of the previous stanza with "Still rears" following "still chafes." Furthermore, the second line of stanza six establishes a chiasmus with line one, the position of "Still" this time offering a different semantic interpretation of it as not extent, now, but manner, that is, guides imperceptively, or in a "still" fashion. In discussing the nature of chiasmus in A General Rhetoric, the authors point out that this particular phenomenon is "the traditional name for a crossed symmetry that emphasizes both meaning and grammar." An example taken from Shakespeare's Hamlet, "What's Hecuba to him or he to Hecuba," further illustrates how the entire half of the symbolic process of language, that is, intersubjectivity, the I/thou relationship can be given dramatic emphasis in the reversal of both the elements.[39] In the case of the Emily Dickinson example, the other half of the symbolic quadrangle is being dramatized, that is quasi-identity, the I/it relationship. And moreover, the polysemic nature of it, conceived again by the qualifying questions that adverbs answer--how, where,

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[39]Group μ, A General Rhetoric, p. 80.

why, to what extent, and in what manner, does it exist?

The final stanza of the poem concludes and reaffirms the foregoing statements of summer's cyclical passage with the introductory word, "So" in the first line, and the juxtapositions of "night and morn" in the second line, concluding the "wonder gay." The last two lines of the poem return to the beginning of a new cycle and maybe a new poem by the introductory coordinating conjunction "And." Also the voice of the poet reenters with strength and conviction, victoriously exclaiming her face to face meeting with the new "summer's day."

So far in discussing this poem, I have treated the larger patterns of rhetoric and grammar, because both have worked together to achieve simultaneously semantic significance and poetic architecture. Yet there remains to be discussed the linguistic interaction of phonemics and metrics which help to create the poem's sound shape.

According to the Emily Dickinson biographers, among whom Thomas H. Johnson figures as one of the most prominent, Emily Dickinson's meters were greatly influenced by English hymnology. In fact, she had been exposed to the hymn forms of Isaac Watts from childhood. Copies of Watts' Christian Psalmody, or his collection of the Psalms Hymns and Spirit-

ual Songs were fixtures in most New England households.[40] Therefore, from her father's library the poet received some of her first instructions in metrics. The hymn meters were principally iambic and trochaic, though occasionally dactylic. Some of the earlier poems of the Dickinson canon are less complicated metrically, and seem to lean heavily on the principal hymn meters for their overall metrical structure. Yet, as this paper demonstrates, the poet learned how to vary the basic iambic greatly, thus allowing herself a greater freedom of expressivity in sound structure.

In his interpretive biography, Thomas Johnson delineates the hymn meters. As he suggests, "Every poem Emily Dickinson composed before 1861, during the years she was learning her craft, is fashioned in one or another of the hymn meters."[41]

The poem we have been discussing is no exception. It was composed about 1859, and follows what was known as the Common Particular meter--an iambic meter, a truncated version of a six-line stanza, having two eight-syllable lines followed by a six-syllable line. In short, cutting the original length, Emily Dickinson had already begun to

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[40]Thomas H. Johnson, "The Poet and the Muse: Poetry as Art," Emily Dickinson: A Collection of Critical Essays, ed. Richard B. Sewall (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall Inc., 1963), p. 70.

[41]Ibid., p. 71.

create her own variations. But upon close scrutiny, one will detect other expressive variations.

The shift to nine syllables in line two of stanza four offsets the expected metrical pattern already established in the preceding stanza, and through the synchronic interplay of metrical and phonemic forces, the semantic idea of "suspended essence" is thereby underscored. The introduction of a trochaic, followed by a dactylic foot further underscores the quality of the image "subtle-shimmering grace," and its possible dissolution were the poet to approach too close. The tenuousness of the poetic structure itself is expressed phonemically in this line by a succession of alliterative spirants introducing lax vowels which create a quality of something "fading away." But the end word "grace" phonemically reconfirms the existence of that which almost disappears by its juxtaposition of opposing phonemes--two strongly voiced consonants, the "g" a stop, plus the "r" a glide, followed by the unvoiced spirant "c," and the unsounded vowel "e," metonymically re-echoing the almost dissolved poem at the point of "subtle-shimmering." It is interesting to note that the "g" of "grace" is the first appearance of this consonantal stop in the poem. The next appearance of it will be in the words "flag," "crag," and "guide," words which phonemically and semantically connote positive concrete images to the reader, countering the more abstract intangible qualities of the

images composed partially of sibilants, i.e., "something solemnizes."

The importance of the foregoing observation to the context of the whole poem is this: though "grace" be an abstract image, the poet satisfies her human need to make it something that can be seen by evolving its meaning in the direction of the "wonder gay" that she knows and feels certain of. The sense of line two is then reinforced semantically, metrically, and phonemically in line three of stanza four when the poet says, "Flutter too far from me." The line is clearly trochaic with the ictus falling on semantically important phonemes: the "Fl" of "Flutter" and the "fr" of "from"--voiceless spirants followed by the voiced lateral "l," and the voiced "r" glide, respectively. The downward movement of the trochee again suggests that falling away quality, a poignant sense of loss.

The fifth and sixth stanzas return to their normal iambic meter, asserting the grace that the poet again sees in the natural world around her. The parallel patterns of phonemes that expressed the abstract essence in the first three stanzas are in stanza five and six paralleled by the opposition of phonemic patterns that are introducing more concrete images, "wizard fingers" and "purple brook," the phonemes themselves occupying positions of equivalent stress both on the vertical and the horizontal line. The ictus falls on the phonemes "brook" and "breast" in line two of

stanza six, and "breast" and "bed" the end words of lines two and three respectively. The Dickinson sense of "brook" as exemplary of Nature itself, echoes the Emersonian one as "essences unchanged by man: space, the air, the river, the leaf," and is thus phonemically re-echoed across and down the lines of the poem.[42]

Stanza six continues the emphasis suggested by line three of stanza five, "still chafes," by the anaphora "still rears." The lines are iambic with no variation. The night is over, and the sun begins to rise, "Guides still the sun along the Crag." The chiasmus of line two, another evidence of parallelism, evinces the structural solidity of the stanza suggested metrically in the iambic line.

Thus with stanzas five and six there are a series of concrete statements which give to the ineffable grace substance, and to the poet security.

The final stanza of the poem has expressed a rising and falling sense, and as such can certainly be said to occupy a certain space and depth. Day rises to noon to night in the first three stanzas. Then at the moment of suspension at stanza four, the poem halts suddenly in the eternal time which the poet thirsts after in much of her poetry, and which she tries to approach through her own

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[42]Brita Lindberg-Seyersted, The Voice of the Poet, pp. 68-69.

timeless world. With stanza four one can perhaps imagine the poet's own dark night of the soul, wherein her voice seeks strength in the depth of the night, yet where, without faith, logic and reason structurally disintegrate. But yet, through grace and renewed belief, stanza five can continue through the night; then with a downward movement, stanza six ends, night ends, and day begins anew.

The final stanza is the resolution, and, I suppose, final evolution of the poem.

Metrically, the most interesting point to be made is the variation from the iambic in line three. The voice of the poem, no longer uncertain or fearful of the grace, meets it head on, as on a galloping steed, in the anapestic line, now seen in direct counterpoint to the trochaic, dactylic line of uncertainty in stanza four. Moreover, as a resolution of what has gone before, this final stanza has four lines to equal and balance the three introductory paratactic stanzas and the three hypotactic, qualifying ones. For here in the last stanza all the elements come together, the night, the morn, the day, and the poetic voice, unabashed.

A further exploration of the role of phonemics as it operates in the poem will now conclude this particular analysis.

The phonemic metonymy that was discussed in the previous poem is seen in this poem in profusion. The poem's

idea of the "something" that eludes her "Too inspecting face," is reinforced both synchronically and diachronically by the recurrent spirants which, furthermore, occupy parallel positions of metrical stress throughout the poem. The recurrent spirants are often followed by vowel qualities that reinforce the evolving images and ideas. For example, the "o" of "something" and "solemnize" is unstressed and lax, and has a dark aspect; it can be contrasted to the tense "i" in bright or light that does suggest something light and clear. There is an interesting interplay of these two oppositions in the poem. Certainly, as Jakobson might suggest, all language is either expressive of likenesses or unlikenesses, of differences or similarities, and as Jakobson does indeed say in Style in Language, "In poetry, any conspicuous similarity in sound is evaluated in respect to similarity and/or dissimilarity in meaning." In a further discussion of this phonemic phenomenon, Jakobson embraces the mythopoeic qualities of language sound and meaning as expressed by such as Mallarme and Poe:

> The super average accumulation of a certain class of phonemes or a contrastive assemblage of two opposite classes in the sound texture of a line, of a stanza, of a poem, acts like an 'undercurrent of meaning,' to use Poe's picturesque expression. In two polar words phonemic relationship may be in agreement with semantic opposition, as in Russian /d,en,/'day' and/noc/'night' with the acute vowel and sharped consonants in the diurnal name, and the corresponding grave vowel in the nocturnal name. A reinforcement of this contrast by surrounding

> the first word with acute and sharped phonemes, in contradistinction to a grave phonemic neighborhood of the second word, makes the sound into a thorough echo of the sense. But in the French jour 'day' and nuit 'night' the distribution of grave and acute vowels is inverted, so that Mallarme's Divagations accuse his mother tongue of a deceiving perversity for assigning to day a dark timbre and to night a light one. Whorf states that when in its sound shape 'a word has an acoustic similarity to its own meaning, we can notice it ... But, when the opposite occurs, nobody notices it.' Poetic language, however, and particularly French poetry in the collision between sound and meaning as detected by Mallarme, either seeks phonological alteration of such a discrepancy and drowns the 'converse' distribution of vocalic features by surrounding nuit with grave and jour with acute phonemes, or it resorts to a semantic shift and its imagery of day and night replace the imagery of light and dark by other synaesthetic correlates of the phonemic opposition grave/acute and, for instance, puts the heavy, warm day in contrast to the airy, cool night; because 'human subjects seem to associate the experience of bright, sharp, hard, high, light (in weight), quick, high-pitched, narrow, and so on in a long series, with each other; and conversely, the experiences of dark, warm, yielding, soft, blunt, low, heavy, slow, low-pitched, wide, etc., in another long series.[43]

With Jakobson's comments serving as an illumination, I can now explore the snychronic and diachronic realities of the minimal pairs of the poem's final stanza.

In line one, stanza seven, "night" and "morn" are juxtaposed. But even more interestingly, the morphemes

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[43]Roman Jakobson, "Closing Statements: Linguistics and Poetics," p. 373.

contain their opposites within themselves, phonemically. "Night" like "bright" contains a tense vowel and suggests clarity, the opposite of its semantic sense, just as the word "morn" contains a grave vowel, its semantic opposite. The same thing happens in the next line with "wonder gay"; "wonder" is grave and "gay" is clear. Now, however, one sees the metonymic principle more clearly, as all the foregoing images come to rest in these four conclusive ones. On the horizontal axis, the juxtaposition is even more interesting as the oppositions cancel each other out phonemically in the "night gay" and the "wonder morn"--in each case clear tense vowels and grave vowels matched, respectively.

Finally, by the end of the poem, the reader has entered Hopkin's "inscape," much like a Japanese landscape, wherein objective form often delimits absence or vacancy, seen here as sound-shape delimiting the space of silence.

Poem #673

In the following poem the "inscape" is "that diviner thing"--Providential Love, hinted at through a series of fleeting, flitting impressions, expressing even more dramatically than in the previous poem a rich interplay of sound symbolism.

Poem #673

The Love a Life can show Below
Is but a filament, I know,
Of that diviner thing
That faints upon the face of Noon-
And smites the Tinder in the Sun-
And Hinders Gabriel's Wing-

'Tis this-in Music-hints and sways-
And far abroad on Summer's days-
Distills uncertain pain-
'Tis this enamors in the East-
And tints the Transit in the West
With harrowing Iodine-

'Tis this-invites-appalls-endows-
Flits-glimmers-proves-dissolves-
Returns-suggests-convicts-enchants-
Then-flings in Paradise-

One discovers in the very first line of the poem a vowel sequence of light and dark aspects alternating in positions of stress with the iambic tetrameter rhythm. The low back vowel in "Love" contrasts with the high front vowel of "Life," expressing therefore more of a semantic difference than would normally be discerned; the word "Below," moreover, shares in the phonemic pattern of both "Life" and "love," suggesting the Platonic notion that since the "Love" spoken of is "Below," it foresakes its ideal clarity and

light, becoming but a "filament," and therefore partially tainted and dark.

The second line of the poem dramatically emphasizes the phonemic dualism of the first line with the introduction of the narrator who is aware of the sullied essence. Her expression "I know" is metonymic with "Below" in the first line, which could be continuous with the iambic meter established in line one, yet it could also be easily read as a spondee. As such, what is established is a metrical phenomenon described by Jakobson:

> As Gerard Manley Hopkins observes in the preface to his poems, 'Two rhythms are in some manner running at once.' His description of such a contrapuntal run can be reinterpreted. The superinducing of an equivalence principle upon the word sequence or, in other terms, the mounting of the metrical form upon the usual speech form, necessarily gives the experience of a double, ambiguous shape to anyone who is familiar with the given language and with verse. Both the convergences and the divergences between the two forms, both the warranted and the frustrated expectations, supply this experience.[44]

The third line of the poem suggests a Providential essence in the succession of either high front or medium front vowels of the phrase "that diviner thing." Lines four, five and six form three parallel qualifying phrases of "that diviner thing." Moreover, each of these three lines contains active verbs, "faints," "smites," and

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[44]Ibid., p. 366.

"hinders," the clear, bright vowel qualities occupying positions between consonantal spirants. The entire phonemic effect semantically suggests the ethereal nature of the unexperienced essence of Divine Love, with the three qualifying phrases suggesting, moreover, the ubiquitous and paradoxical power in question that could both "faint" and "smite" in the face of the sun, and at the same time stop the messages of Gabriel.

Stanza two continues the process of argumentation begun in the first stanza. Syntactically, the first line is elliptical with "'Tis this," becoming a compressed metaphor for the entire first stanza. The metaphoric compression continues with the introduction of the prepositional and appositional phrases "in Music-hints and sways-," the latter containing phonemes that are metonymically equivalent with semantically significant words of stanza one: "hints," harking back to "Tinder," and "hinder," "sways," to "faints," "face," and "Gabriel's." The suggestion would appear to be that "Music," and to some degree, poetry, come closest to disclosing--"hinting at," the Divine Essence.

Stanza two continues as line two adds yet another dimension to the unsolved riddle. Spatially, the poem has undergone an abrupt change. "And far abroad on Summer's days," with its succession of low back and mid central tense unrounded and mid back tense round open vowel qualities; phonemically, one is indeed very "far" from the space of

line one, which "hints" at things near--clearly within ear's reach in the succession of high front unrounded vowels.

In The Sound Shape of Language, Jakobson alludes to the 1922 essay by Otto Jespersen, "Symbolic value of the Vowel i," in which he attempts to show that the vowel (i), "high front unrounded, especially in its narrow or thin form, serves very often to indicate what is small, slight, insignificant or weak." Numerous examples drawn from both children's word-play and literary tradition support Jespersen's claim that "sound symbolism plays a greater role in the development of languages than is admitted by most linguists."[45]

Emily Dickinson understood the possibilities of exploiting the symbolic value of the vowel (i) as well. For with the beginning of line three, in the word "Distills," the space of the poem has once again become very concentrated, and there is, moreover, the phonemic echo of "filament," which attains additional semantic significance as the "narrow or thin form," the thread-like conductor to a higher reality. And though the pain be "uncertain," it is intense--the "distilling process" of Nature has localized its ubiquity within the regions of the mind which takes on the painful powers of symbolization.

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[45]Roman Jakobson, The Sound Shape of Language, p. 183.

In line four of the poem, the space again expands, syntactically creating an anaphoric pattern with line one, but semantically suggesting Divine Providence's embracing of the rising sun; the explosion of passion recreated phonemically in the long "e" sound, which has been studied according to its synaesthetic correlatives by several linguists, including Benjamin Lee Whorf, who, as cited by Jakobson, first noted that:

> ... the vowels 'a' (as in 'father'), 'o,' 'u,' are associated in the laboratory tests with the dark-warm-soft series, and 'e' (English 'a' in 'date'), 'i' (English 'e' in 'be') with the bright-cold-sharp set. Consonants also are associated about us as one might expect from ordinary naive feeling in the matter. (1956:467f.)[46]

Line five continues the progress of sound imagery with a succession of dental and interdental stops combined with short "i" and "e" vowel sounds to give the synaesthetic impression of "thinness" and "vacancy," a sunset. Then in line six, the "r" and "w" pre-palatal and velar glides, of "Transit" and "West," respectively, are swept into the dramatic pause, "With harrowing Iodine-," which terrorizes the reader with the spatial conception of cavernous darkness. Yet, in the light of the sound imagery so far analyzed in the poem, the phrase "harrowing Iodine," rather oxymoronic like Milton's "Darkness Visible," achieves its dramatic

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[46]Ibid., p. 192.

intensity precisely because of the tension created through the contradiction of semantic meaning and phonemic suggestiveness--the high tense vowel "i" having connoted brightness, sharpness and clarity, now paradoxically forming a word, "Iodine," that means "a grayish-black, crystalline solid that sublimes to a dense violet vapor."

The last stanza of the poem indeed "invites" the reader to explore the "Inscape" of the poet's vision. The sound shapes analyzed thus far are recreated again in a series of compressed metaphors which cumulatively adduce the Divine essence.

Syntactically, the stanza repeats the beginning of stanza two with the elliptical "'Tis this." The remainder of the stanza is a series of parallel elliptical statements, formed of active verbs which transport the reader in and out of a number of lexical contraries. Emily Dickinson's polysemic, transient vision of "Paradise" would seem to lexically and phonemically recreate her own poetic art as it sometimes flows, sometimes ebbs, sometimes grows, sometimes almost "dissolves," but finally "Returns," to be "flung into Paradise."

Poem #712

As was observed in the analysis of poem #673, Emily Dickinson's spatial imagination allows her to transcend the vicissitudes of mortal time and leap into a placating "Paradisal" vision. In the following poem she does the same thing. But this time she takes us on a carriage ride, wherein the existential concreteness of her own provincial New England world is about to be poignantly passed. When the "passing" becomes a "pausing," Eternity cannot be too far away, yet it is never really reached.

As the persona finally reaches "A Swelling of the Ground," she has, as Glauco Cambon might suggest in The Inclusive Flame, "shed the weight of matter." Yet, as the poem goes on to express, and as Cambon might say:

> ... Death denies her the ultimate vision;
> so that in a way the trip never finishes,
> its goal being everywhere and nowhere.
> And the trip actually symbolizes the
> finite-infinite process of existence
> toward, through, and beyond consciousness;
> by the same token, it also alludes to the
> trajectory of poetry as a consummation of
> language (since this can only coincide
> with the gradual heightening of consciousness); finally its meaning can be extended
> to adumbrate, prophetically, the posthumous adventure of Emily's verse into
> the awareness of modern readers the world
> over--an eclipse to be followed by apocalypse.[47]

One modern reader, the composer Aaron Copland, found in "The Chariot" enough inspiration for his own musical

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[47]Glauco Cambon, The Inclusive Flame, p. 47.

composition of it. Copland's attempt to recreate the poet's own verbal dissonances and her startling rhymes, musically, seems to reinforce the Jakobson, Chomsky/Bernstein ideas of verbal harmony being based on a series of transformations and repetitions of kernel units embracing the entire linguistic chain.[48]

In turning to the poem, now, it will be illuminating to see how the kernel ideas do, in fact, determine the evolution of its linguistic form.

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[48]Joseph Kerman, "American Music: The Columbia Series (II)," The Hudson Review 14:3, (Autumn 1961).

Poem #712

Because I could not stop for Death
He kindly stopped for me-
The Carriage held but just Ourselves-
And Immortality.

We slowly drove-He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labor and my leisure too,
For His Civility-

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess-in the Ring-
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain
We passed the Setting Sun-

Or rather-He passed Us-
The Dews drew quivering and chill-
For only Gossamer, my Gown-
My Tippet-only Tulle-

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground-
The Roof was scarcely visible-
The Cornice-in the Ground-

Since then-'tis Centuries-and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmized the Horses Heads
Were toward Eternity-

The iambic poem is divided into six stanzas, the first three of which show metrical correspondences in odd/even lines, which is moreover reinforced with the exact rhyme scheme in the even lines of the first two stanzas. In fact, the metrical pattern which is established--iambic tetrameter/trimeter, or otherwise the Common Meter borrowed from hymnology, lends a common, everyday air to the Carriage ride. The metrical expectations are then counterpointed with semantic surprise as "Death" is substituted for some-

thing more mundane, such as "lunch" or "my friend." The two levels of diction, then, are tensely sustained with "Immortality" replacing a tangible personality, "labor and leisure" replacing something more expected, such as "ironing or needlepoint," and "Civility" being synchronic with "Immortality" of the first stanza and echoing its sense of a "kind Death."

Phonemically, moreover, the semantic suggestion of a carriage ride occurring is sustained through the recurrent alternating vowel stresses, high front vowels, in the phoneme "Be," for example, followed by the low back vowels in "cause," the arsis and the ictus coinciding respectively. The number of high tensed vowels in the second line actually facilitates a stopping action, and the recurrent "r" glides in "Carriage" and "Ourselves," plus the voiced and unvoiced spirants in the latter and in "Immortality" help to create the feeling of motion.

An interesting point about person and number can be observed in the first two stanzas. There is multiple narration, or, if you will, a possible absence of neutralization of subject or apparent subject. Pronominalization undergoes several transformations in the first two stanzas: from "I" to "He" to "me" to "Ourselves," all subsumed under the kernel word "Immortality" in the first stanza; and then in stanza two, "We" changes to "He" changes to "I" changes to "my" then to "His Civility"--the key word of the quatrain.

In the change from the "I" to the "he," the expressive and the connotative functions of language, focusing on the addresser and the addressee, respectively, become equivalent in the poem: they become, in fact, synecdochic to "Ourselves" or "Immortality," which is joined to "Ourselves" in the poem by the coordinating conjunction "and," which syntactically joins parallel or equivalent ideas. This observation becomes very important to the workings of the entire poem, as it would appear that Emily Dickinson's desire to achieve ultimate essence in this poem becomes possible through a clever manipulation of pronominalization, in which the ortho-person or real subject, "I," consumes the apparent subject or pseudo-person, "he/it"; in this case, Death then rises above both to become Immortality or Infinity, or in the words of the poet--"Eternity," out of the range of person or time.

In stanza three of the poem, the momentum is increased, and the suggestion of the Carriage's passage through time is facilitated by several interdependent linguistic phenomena. First of all, the first, third, and fourth lines of the stanza begin identically with the same syntactical sequence--subject, active verb, direct object. This anaphora, moreover, is reinforced phonemically, with three successive voiced glides--"W" followed by three labial voiceless stops in "p," followed by the voiceless spirants "ss," all of which contribute to the sound shape

of the quatrain's unimpeded movement through mortal time.

Semantically and syntactically, the first two lines of stanza three are particularly poignant, as there is the suggestion of a last long look at school, the place of children just beginning the journey the persona of the poem is now ending. These two lines can be seen rhetorically, moreover, as a series of synecdoches; in fact, the entire third stanza is synecdochic of mortal life.

Whereas the third stanza was continuous with the first two stanzas, metrically, in the fourth stanza, there is an abrupt change; a syntactical reversal of pronouns slows the pace. Suddenly the narrator is uncertain of her own spatial movement and form. Is there movement or isn't there? "Am I or am I not?" This is indeed the crucial moment in the poem. The substance of the poem diminishes here to approach vacancy or absence. This expression is accomplished syntactically, metrically, semantically and phonemically.

A spondee, followed by a trochaic, followed by three spondees comprises line one of stanza four, frustrating the metricity of the first three stanzas, and bringing the poem to a halt. The second line, entirely spondaic, recreates the sense of shivering, which is, moreover, recreated by the recurrent voiced and voiceless consonantal stops as in "Dews," "Drew," "Gossamer," "Gown," "Tippet," "Tulle." Lines three and four appear to return to the

established metrical rhythm of the rest of the poem. But syntactically, there is evidence of ellipsis as the crucial verb of essence, in this case "was," is conspicuously absent from the lines.

The fifth stanza suggests a sense of resignation from the previous one. "We passed" is now "We paused." Familiar diction forms this space: "House," "Roof," "Cornice," are kernel ideas. The progress of the poem has evolved to its present phonemic "inscape"--the round swell of fulfillment.

The final stanza is a reflection from Eternity. The "I" dares to reassert itself, as it can securely partake in a greater, majestic "We," the space of which embraces the Day, the Centuries, and, of course, Immortality.

Poem #1670

Thus far in the analyses of Emily Dickinson's poetry, I believe that I have been able to "make strange" to the observer or addressee several examples of innate language phenomena which operate synchronically on the surface of the poem to create its rich architecture. To briefly review these ideas with regards to the specific poems in which they occurred, I would first like to go back to poem #89. In this poem, parallelism, and one of its variations, antithesis, operates both across lines and down stanzas to hint at the seme which will answer the "Riddle." The antithesis, furthermore, is illuminated by the ellipses, which, as already suggested, creates a spatial order for the poem as something to be "seen." Ellipsis also allows the lyrical "I" to evolve patterns of evolution and dissolution in the poem, as the persona creates alternate atmospheres of security or insecurity in respect to the referrent. It is observed, therefore, from the first poem under analysis, that three Chomskian deep structural principles, namely, parallelism, ellipsis, and pronominalization, can be readily observed on the poetic surface structure as they interrelate to enkindle "aesthetic consciousness."

In the analysis of poem #370, parallelism operates again, but not in its variation of antithesis, wherein a balance of hyperbole approaches an unspoken referent, but in repetition, which, as has been seen, "marks above all the

distance established concerning the referent, which it treats as a sum of ontological units to which language adds supplementary units." The ingenious treatment of "Heaven" as "so far" yet so near, is accomplished, therefore, through the adding and equating of the polysemic phonemic constituents which make up the word. I'm wondering if Noam Chomsky ever read any of Emily Dickinson's poetry, because "surprising facts" she has in abundance, and maybe even a few phonological ones, at that.

From poem #370 to poem #122, one sees still another variation of an expected parallel structure. Along with repetition there is, this time, also evidence of chiasmus, which in its reversal of elements emphasizes both meaning and grammar, and the polysemic nature of the referent. In this case, the chiasmus, involving the word "still," there are the qualifying questions that adverbs answer--how, where, why, to what extent, and in what manner does the referent exist? And of course, in this poem, the copula is conspicuously absent. So does its absence, the ellipsis, provoke the above questions from an all too curious poet-narrator. In fact, the poem almost dissolves at one point--in a succession of sibilants.

Then in poem #673, it is poetic sound play that dominates the scene. Phonemic, semic Impressionism, Fleeting, flitting Expressions of "Life" and "Love." This poem does "hint" at Music, which leads us into the next one, the

famous "Chariot," whose musicality was appreciated and recreated by Aaron Copland. Certainly, if no other definitive statement can be made about Emily Dickinson's poetry, it must be said that she knew how to create marvelous dissonances in her juxtapositions of word levels. Furthermore, as has been discovered in poem #122, for example, her juxtapositions explored sub-morphemic levels as well, allowing her to compress metaphor to the furthest possible degree--approaching absence. But to return to "The Chariot," it is in this poem, as well, that some interesting things are happening with pronominalization. Through clever manipulation, the ortho-person or real subject, "I," consumes the apparent subject, or pseudo-person, "he/it," in this case, Death, to rise above both to become Immortality, or finally, "Eternity."

In the following poem, another phenomenon is added to Emily Dickinson's list of tactics. In addition to an interesting manipulation of diction levels, there is some clever manipulation of genre categories, facilitated through the narrative voice. With the addresser/addressee relationship becoming blurred, as in a "Dream," one more aspect of the polysemism of texts can be brought into view.

Poem #1670

In Winter in my Room
I came upon a Worm
Pink lank and warm
But as he was a worm
And worms presume
Not quite with him at home
Secured him by a string
To something neighboring
And went along.

A Trifle afterward
A thing occurred
I'd not believe it if I heard
But state with creeping blood
A snake with mottles rare
Surveyed my chamber floor
In feature as the worm before
But ringed with power
The very string with which
I tied him--too
When he was mean and new
That string was there--

I shrank- "How fair you are!"
Propitiation's claw-
"Afraid he hissed
Of me?"
"No cordiality"--
He fathomed me-
Then to a Rhythm Slim
Secreted in his Form
As Patterns swim
Projected him.

That time I flew
Both eyes his way
Lest he pursue
Nor ever ceased to run
Till in a distant Town
Towns on from mine
I set me down
This was a dream-

Poem #1670 evolves the kind of enigmatic pattern that T. S. Eliot created in "Four Quartets" in the "music" created out of the sound and rhythms of spoken words, but

moreover, the poem "signifies the structure of interrelation among different kinds of speech and other poetic materials,"[49] establishing among other things "a contrapuntal arrangement of subject matter, which, according to Eliot, "is no less a characteristic of poetry than music itself."[50]

The sound properties of the first stanza are those of the recurring "w," which creates and implants in the ear of the reader the idea of the worm and its slow, winding movements in the poet's room. The words winter, room, warm, home, suggest the synchronic synonymities of these ideas, with their sense of size and shape, and space of their interaction in the first stanza. At the same time that tension is created by the phonemic equivalencies of Winter Room and warm Worm, so is their antitheses of cold inanimate spatiality, and warm animated compactness.

The syntactics of the first stanza further illuminate the slowed movements of the worm and the somewhat analytical distant encounter of the poet-observer. In fact, the fourth line to the sixth line forms one long parenthetic statement. Moreover, the third line of the poem, containing adjectives spiralling back upon the noun of the previous

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[49]Grover Smith, T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays: A Study in Sources and Meanings (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1956), p. 252.

[50]T. S. Eliot, The Music of Poetry, p. 28, quoted by Grover Smith in T. S. Eliot's Poetry and Plays, p. 252.

line, suggests a snake's inhibitory forward movement. Also the first line of the poem itself begins with a preposition that one must return to after encountering the first essential verb "came." One could also mention anastrophe within lines, for example line six, more commonly read, "I am not quite at home with him." The ellipsis of "I" (the subject) rhetorically detaches interest from the speaker and helps to focus attention on the "thing" the first stanza's rhythms have been so far simulating.

The movement of the second stanza is continuous with the last line of the first stanza, and there is evidence of syntactical parallelism in the parenthetical interjection of the poet in lines three and four. Still the tone is rather distant; one does not get the feeling that this thing is happening to her. It is just a "thing" occurred. And by now the reader can recognize the double meaning of "thing" as both worm/snake and event. One can then begin to appreciate the word "Trifle" as synecdochic for the entire first stanza. The word "Trifle" echoes the sense of "quite" as in not quite important--insignificant, yet the meaning comes through antithesis again as quite means to a considerable extent or degree. Thus an ironic tone runs through the poem from the position of the narrator vis-a-vis the worm.

Also, in the second stanza, the poet-narrator is under the spell of the worm--now a snake, whose rhetoric

circles into itself as a series of rings spiralling back into itself. There is the fluid sense of blood recreated in the metonymic patterns within lines in such words as: creeping, snake, surveyed, feature, ring, all of which con- high tense vowels, and could suggest the kinesthetic crawling skin sensation of the interior space of the nar- rator as well as the exterior space of the snake's movements. The word "creeping" is itself a condensed metaphor for the entire stanza, for it, alone, occupies the normal syntactic position before the noun. Also of significance is the jamming together of different levels of diction, the stiff formality of chamber and surveyed, terms used in deference to the snake's position, to indicate the irony that the roles are reversed, and that the poet is no longer quite secure in her securing.

And now, and again ironically, the significance of the first stanza is inverted, and the string becomes a major event:

> The very string with which
> I tied him--too
> When he was mean and new
> That string was there--

Of course the serpentine pattern that evolves in this poem is partially created by the run-on lines. Where the lines are end-stopped, for example the line in stanza two, there is particular emphasis, as in a sudden stop, be- fore the snake's sudden jerking movement, a fact achieved as

stanza three begins, abruptly, with a spondee.

"I shrank-" The irony here is that the narrator should "shrink" in significance to the thing that was just a "Trifle" earlier in the poem. The tenseness of diction that Eliot refers to in "Music and Poetry" is exemplified. "Propitiation," the Latinate polysyllable, is juxtaposed with the monosyllabic Anglo-Saxon "claw," the former pretentious, the latter primitive. The phonemic "hiss" of the narrator, her own voiceless pre-palatal spirant, scares the snake, and in essence cancels out its own hiss, which is of the same phonemic linguistic structure.

The tenseness that is set up by the levels of diction continues in the next few lines wherein the snake answers "Propitiation's claw" with his own simple, "Afraid," he hissed. The encounter continues in an abrupt interchange. The next line is an iambic dimeter question, "Of me?" phonemically equivalent to "he" of the preceding line and underscores through semantic contrast that the poet sees herself one way, while the snake sees her fearfully through her cold rhetoric, "No cordiality." Here's another one of those perfect Emily Dickinson choices. For cordiality ironically suggests to the narrator the serpentine figure she, herself, sees in the snake. First of all, it contrasts strikingly with the monosyllable "me" that he is <u>not</u> afraid of. He <u>is</u> afraid of the five syllable Latinate word, whose

kernel morpheme again, ironically, is "cord," according to Random House, "a string of thin rope made of several strands braided, twisted or woven together." But this time it is the poet who wears it!

The word "cord" is also connotative of heart or heartfelt; in this case the narrator's heart metamorphosed into the snake-like fear of vulnerability. This lexical tension, moreover, is reinforced metrically in line five as a spondee followed by an iambus.

The next line is very intriguing: "He fathomed me." I believe "fathom" is the key word to the entire poem, as it involves a fathoming of one's own psyche and its depths of consciousness. In lines seven to ten the slithering movements of the snake have now reached a dramatic level. The swish of sound is certainly anticipatory of the attack, with anticipation reinforced syntactically, as the verb of action, "Projected," occupies the position of the first word of the last line of the third stanza.

The movement of the snake to the attack is the highest point in the poem. Now the tense levels of diction are reversed, and the words to describe the snake's movements are abstract, metalingual concepts, such as "Form," "secret-et," "Patterns," "Projected." Ironically enough, self-referential words as the poem is projected on the page.

The density of these four lines, each of which is a run-on syntactically, is also achieved through the end-words

ending in "m," including exact rhymes and one half-rhyme.

Finally, the last stanza moves quickly as the narrator tries to escape the snake and to catch her breath. Lines one, two, three, and five, syntactically help the pace along as each contains active verbs, with the actor/subject appearing in the first line, "I flew." The final line is rhetorically and metrically emphatic as it spondaically expresses the relief of the recovered poet-narrator, "This was a dream."

What appears to be operating with the narrator/worm communion is what A General Rhetoric discusses in "Figures of Narrative Voice" as "the inverse commutation," wherein the "I" actually becomes the "you," as in the interior monologue, or in this case, within the dream, within the poem.[51]

In this kind of situation, "the I is divided into parcelled I's that refer to each other and permit the speaker to combine the connotative function with the expressive function of the language." The text notes that, "we have recourse to it all the time--whenever we want to hold ourselves at a distance." However, in keeping with Emily Dickinson's polysemic vision as it is expressed in her poetry through all its linguistic elements, it would seem

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[51]Group μ, A General Rhetoric, p. 176.

that there are two phenomena of voice occurring synchronically.

There is both a person/non-person commutation as the message's addressee becomes the poet's own poem as it evolves, and also, there is the dialogue between the "I" and the parcelled "I" as the narrator sees the nightmarish vision of herself as the worm-snake of the dream.

A final comment on the last line of the poem, "This was a dream-." In this statement, one has the deviation from a particular genre, as the rhetoric again creates the critical "I" from the narrative "I." So do we see Emily Dickinson as critic as well as story teller. A General Rhetoric refers to this phenomenon as criticism of "identification," an idea which has received a credible voice under the influence of Bachelard, and which is "imposed to try to deny the distance separating the critic from his author."[52]

So has another element been added to Emily Dickinson's seeming incomprehensibility. As A General Rhetoric humbly adds about the above phenomenon, "We really know too little about this process."[53]

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[52]Ibid., p. 174.

[53]Ibid.

Poem #1700

In the previous poem, an analysis of the poet's polysemic vision illustrates her rhetorical attempt to commute the properties of persons to express the inexpressible--the powers of the mind before the mediating symbol.

In the following poem the poet's polysemic vision can be illustrated from one last point of view--grammatical/syntactical ambiguity. Noam Chomsky's transformational grammar theory of deep structure/surface structure language properties provides the necessary analytical tool.

Although Chomsky's later works, including Reflections on Language, tend to refute the earlier theories (for the reason that I now conclude to have been too much widespread misunderstanding of them),[54] nevertheless, they serve to greatly illuminate creative language processes. So let it suffice to say that for the purposes of the present analysis, that "deep" will include any of the structures already mentioned in the introduction to this essay which help to uncover "surprising facts" about Emily Dickinson's "House of Possibilities."

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[54]Noam Chomsky, Reflections on Language, p. 82.

Poem #1700

To tell the Beauty would decrease
To state the Spell demean
There is a syllable-less Sea
Of which it is the sign
My will endeavors for it's word
And fails, but entertains
A Rapture as of Legacies-
Of introspective Mines-

A linguistic analysis of the first four lines of the poem will reveal the synchronic elements as each functions to give evidence of the deep structure phonomena intrinsic to all language. One of the proofs of deep structure phonomena in language is parallelism. Here, in this poem, parallelism operates phonemically, metrically, semantically and syntactically. A scansion of the metrical line reveals parallelism in the alternative iambic trimeter of lines one and three, two and four, respectively. Moreover, the operation of metrics within each line creates emphasis with the ictus falling on semantically significant words: "Beauty," "Spell," "decrease," "demean," "sign." Of equal importance, however, is the arsis, which establishes parallelism of phonemic and metrical equivalences by falling on the functor words of lines one and two: "To tell the," "To state the." In addition, the crucial pre-caesural positions (which establish fundamental oppositions in the metrical line by juxtaposing ideas) here parallels "Beauty" of line one, "Spell" of line two, and "is" of line four. Significantly, "syllable-less Sea" of line three defies the

caesural division through alliteration, suggesting the "silence" beyond words, the ineffable unity of "meaning," which even eludes the poet.

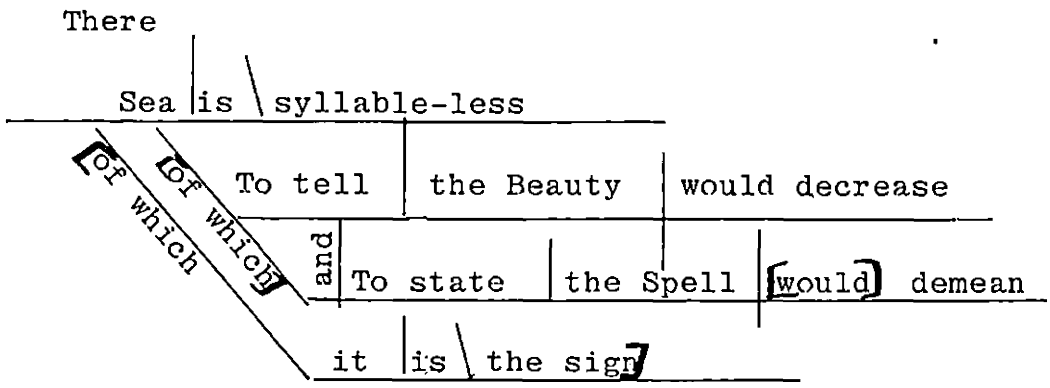
A close scrutiny of lines one, two and four will reveal the fundamental oppositions generated by the caesura. In line one, "Beauty," an abstract ideal, would "decrease," literally "grow down," if it were "told." Similarly, in line two would the "Spell," the "mystery," of meaning be "demeaned," "lead down," if it were "stated." The organic quality of meaning which is suggested in the juxtaposition of words in the first two lines is confirmed in line four, where "is" and "sign" bridge the copula, the essential verb of symbolization, which, in its infinitive state, actually derives from the Aryan root "as," to "breathe," and "be" from "Bhku," "to grow." Moreover, it is the copula which facilitates the poem's particular paradox--the value, yet the inability of words to express meaning.

The fundamental oppositions established by the caesura are reinforced by the interplay of forces on the end words of the poem. The alternation of assonance and consonance in "decrease," "sea" (lines one and three), and "demean," "sign" (lines two and four), establishes the opposition through phonemic equivalence. The end words of the poem are also of particular interest because they create the opposition through negative and positive semantically equivalent elements. The caesural phenomena which occurs

across the metrical line would thus appear to find its counterpart in the opposition of lines one and two with three and four on the vertical axis. This opposition is established by the semantically equivalent "sign" and "Sea," both of which refer to an unformulated symbol in the poet's mind, and act together to oppose "decrease" and "demean" of lines one and two, verbs suggesting the disintegration of meaning were the symbol to be formulated in this context.

So far this discussion has concerned itself with the stages of phonemic, metric and semantic evolution in the poem, yet there remains the syntactic stage which will also provide some interesting evidence of deep structure phenomena.

The diagram below shows one way of expressing the structural relationships which exist in the poem. As can be seen, the first four lines comprise a complex sentence --one independent clause and three dependent clauses which function adjectively to describe "Sea" in the main clause. From a surface structural perspective, "Sea" is the central focus of the poem to which all syntactic structures refer. Yet, as has been proposed through Chomsky's theory of Generative-Transformational Grammar, the surface structure does not always give proof of deep structure. A return to poetry as a "synchronic phenomena" suggests that many meanings can simultaneously arise from a core meaning, in this instance, the word "Sea."



A return to the diagram will give evidence of deep structure in the ambiguous referent of the word "it," which would appear to refer to "Sea." But the brackets surrounding the prepositional phrase containing "it" suggest that this pronoun could also refer to "Beauty" or "Spell." So, at least in the case of "Spell" and "Beauty," there is surface structural confirmation in their respective equivalencies in the pre-caesural positions in the metrical line.

Deep structure phenomena is also evidenced in the parallelism of the two prepositional phrases "of which"; the former being an ellipsis which introduces the parallel infinitive phrases as adjectival modifiers of the word "Sea," the latter being the ambiguous modifier of "Spell," "Beauty," or "Sea."

There is another deep structural phenomena in the two parallel infinitive phrases themselves, which act together both to cement structurally the central idea of the poem and to place it in an atmosphere of boundlessness and timelessness. For the very nature of the infinitive is to

be without limitation of person or number.

As if to re-echo the poet's own attempt in the first four lines to achieve essence, the analysis of the first four lines of the poem has delved into the details of the poem's polysemic patterns. The analysis of the last four lines of the poem, however, will be more holistic, concentrating on the poet's change of tone, her rediscovery of inner vastness.

The last four lines of the poem express the poet's failure to penetrate the mystery of language. Yet the failure is paradoxically met as a "Rapture of Legacies," a discovery of unexpected layers of vastness, a confrontation of self in an inner space:

> My will endeavors for it's word
> And fails, but entertains
> A Rapture as of Legacies-
> Of introspective Mines-

The syntax of these lines underscores the poet's discovery of "Mind." It would seem that the poem would dissolve completely after "fails" in the second line. But if one regards the syntax closely, the "failing" is rhetorically balanced by parallel connectives "And fails, but entertains." In fact, what follows "entertains" is a cancellation of the failure as concrete qualifiers in the form of prepositional phrases bring the poem back into the visible from its temporary removal into the invisible and incomprehensible. So Emily Dickinson bridges "the syllable-less Sea by identify-

ing herself as the "pure self becoming its own theater" "full as Opera," where she is "out of sight, in sound."

A Synthesis

In the preceding pages I have attempted to illuminate the poetry of Emily Dickinson by approaching it from a linguistic and rhetorical perspective--by analyzing its language in the Saussurian sense. What now remains is to establish a synthesis of ideas on the poetic function in general, based on an integration of the philosophies of Noam Chomsky, Roman Jakobson, and the authors of A General Rhetoric, and to reiterate how Emily Dickinson's poetic vehicle, in particular, provides an organic reality wherein the ideas have "worked."

First of all, in order for poetry to "work" it must be effective, it must have effective rhetoric. To be effective, rhetoric must "make strange" to the observer universal language phenomena by bringing to the "surface" of the text innate processes such as parallelism, pronominalization, and ellipsis, and all the variations, additions, suppressions and substitutions--all the transformations of the symbol which help to bring language into existence, and particularly, poetry into existence.

The peculiar richness of poetry as symbolic event results, thereby, from a patterned integration of the above phenomena, from the smallest phonemic unit to the largest syntactic-clausal one; it results from "Gem-Tactics," Emily Dickinson's term for the poetic process.

Since it was with Emily Dickinson's discovery of her own process of "Gem-Tactics" that I began this discussion, I think it would be fitting to end it the same way--with a poem in which she does the analysis. Its subject is the nature of "Being" in its "opening and closing"; yet it is also about the nature of Poetry, because, as this paper has demonstrated, poetry is an organism. So do the "two coeval come," to submit a final comment on the poet's poetics.

Poem #1047

The opening and the Close
Of Being are alike
Or differ, if they do,
As Bloom upon a stalk.

That from an equal Seed
Unto an equal Bud
Go parallel, perfected
In that they have decayed.

In the final analysis, then, the poetry of Emily Dickinson is a "Mindful" exercise of evolution and dissolution. Evolution, in its dynamic interplay of phonemic, metric, semantic, syntactic, and rhetorical phenomena; dissolution, in its return to the primordial silence from which it springs.

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