



Sound

When getting away from the straight rhythms of a poem, we get into the sounds. As mentioned above, if the meter is the poetic equivalent of the horizontal movement in a piece of music, then sound is the vertical movement. If meter serves to cut up the poem into time, then sound serves to configure the poem into a melody or sorts. This means that repeated sounds cohere the poem in much the same way that repeated rhythms do. There are nearly as many aspects to sound as there is to rhythm. The first is perhaps the one with which people are typically most familiar.

Rhyme

A major aspect of sound in more formal verse is rhyme. Poetry with a set rhyme scheme is less common now than it once was, but it is still used, and can still be powerful. Used effectively, it is one of the many important tools in the poet's toolbox. The presence of rhyme in a free verse poem serves to offset those lines that rhyme. Think of the non-rhyming lines in free verse as establishing a pattern of not rhyming, then the use of rhyme breaks the aural and visual pattern and creates emphasis by variation from that pattern.

Take, as an example, this rather whimsical poem from Robert Creeley, "The Conspiracy":

<p>You send me your poems, I'll send you mine.</p> <p>Things tend to awaken even through random communication.</p> <p>Let us suddenly proclaim spring. And jeer</p> <p>at the others, all the others.</p> <p>I will send a picture too if you will send me one two.</p> <p>(Creeley 39)</p>	<p>"I believe in a poetry determined by the language of which it is made....I look to words, and nothing else, for my own redemption either as a man or poet." From "A Note" by Robert Creeley, 1960</p>
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The last stanza varies from the rest of the poem in that it rhymes (the two "others" in the previous stanza rhyme too, but, as he repeats the same word, it is probably more of a way of ramping up to the final stanza (visually and aurally) than a "hard" rhyme.) This serves to set the last stanza apart and to draw the poem to a close. Merrill's poem above also uses a similar device, although in separate stanzas. But because of the abnormal pattern of rhyme in the poem, it can hardly be said to have a "**rhyme scheme**."

The term **rhyme scheme** simply refers to the repetition of a rhyme throughout a poem. A rhyme scheme is typically shown with letters representing the patterns that the rhymes make throughout the poem. Take, for example, this poem from Gerard Manley Hopkins:

<p>The Candle Indoors</p> <p>SOME candle clear burns somewhere I come by. I muse at how its being puts blissful back With yellowy moisture mild night's blear-all black, Or to-fro tender trambeams truckle at the eye. By that window what task what fingers ply, I plod wondering, a-wanting, just for lack Of answer the eagerer a-wanting Jessy or Jack There God to aggrandise, God to glorify.—</p> <p>Come you indoors, come home; your fading fire</p>
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Mend first and vital candle in close heart's vault:
You there are master, do your own desire;
What hinders? Are you beam-blind, yet to a fault
In a neighbour deft-handed? Are you that liar
And, cast by conscience out, spendsavour salt?

(From <http://www.bartleby.com/122/26.html>)

Here the rhyme schemes would be labeled ABBACDDC for the first stanza and EFEFEF for the second. Take the rhyming words and put them next to the letters and you will see the reasoning:

A by
B back
B black
A eye
C ply
D lack
D Jack
C glorify

E fire
F vault
E desire
F fault
E liar
F salt

Hopkins here is using a variation on the traditional Petrarchan sonnet form (evidenced first in the fact that, like all sonnets, it has 14 lines.) And the rhyme scheme is now obvious. The patterns put forth in the rhyme scheme create a notable pattern. Hopkins uses what most readers are familiar with— what is called **perfect rhyme**, where the two (or three or four) words are in complete aural correspondence. These are rhymes like certain and curtain or any of the rhymes in the Hopkins example above. But we have not yet discussed the other varieties of rhyme.

One issue that the poet must contend with is that in order to use rhyme well, it can't be forced. All of us have read ineffective poems where the rhymes sounded like "the cat sat on the mat" and we felt like we were being forced into a box that felt both unnatural and unnerving. This type of rhyme is actually called **forced rhyme**, because it does exactly that; forces the rhyme where it should not otherwise be. This method of rhyme can be used at times, but the poet should know that its effect is typically comic. Since one of the poet's end goals is inevitably to make their structure work for the poem so well that it is not obvious at first that it is even there at all, then the effective use of the different kinds of rhyme can serve these ends.

Types of Rhyme

- **Perfect Rhyme:** The words are in complete aural correspondence. An example would be: *Certain* and *Curtain*.
- **Forced Rhyme:** An unnatural rhyme that forces a rhyme where it should not otherwise be.
- **Slant Rhyme:** The words are similar but lack perfect correspondence. Example: *found* and *kind*, *grime* and *game*.
- **Masculine Rhyme:** Has a single stressed syllable rhyme. Example: *fight* and *tight*, *stove* and *trove*.
- **Feminine Rhyme:** A stressed syllable rhyme followed by an unstressed syllable. Example: *carrot* and *garret*, *sever* and *never*.
- **Visual Rhyme:** A rhyme that only looks similar, but when spoken sound different. Example: *slaughter* and *laughter*. This type of rhyme can be used more to make a visual pattern than to make a aural rhyme.

Again we can see, using the examples from the Creeley and Merrill poems, one way that rhyme can be used effectively in free verse. Here, as with the meter, the effect of variance comes from the establishment of the poem having no set rhyme scheme and then putting a rhyme into the poem.

Another often-seen rhyme technique is **internal rhyme**. With internal rhyme, the rhyme comes in the middle of the line rather than the end.

A good example of this is in the first stanza of Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven":

Once upon a midnight dreary, while I pondered, weak and weary,
Over many a quaint and curious volume of forgotten lore,
While I nodded, nearly napping, suddenly there came a tapping,
As of someone gently rapping, rapping at my chamber door.
" 'Tis some visitor," I muttered, "tapping at my chamber door;
Only this, and nothing more."

Note that in lines 1 and 3 you get an internal rhyme with "dreary" and "weary," and "napping" and "tapping." This technique can sometimes be used to de-emphasize a rhyme that would otherwise be too obvious.

Take, for example, these lines from Gary Snyder's poem "Riprap":

Lay down these words
Before your mind like rocks.
 placed solid, by hands
In choice of place, set
Before the body of the mind
 in space and time:
(Snyder 32)

There are a lot of things going on here, but the places worth pointing out in regard to internal rhyme are "place" and "space" in lines 4 and 6, and the internal slant rhyme in line 4, "choice" and "place."

Other Matters of Sound

The other major matters of sound that have yet to be discussed but are just as important are **assonance**, **consonance**, and **alliteration**.

- **Assonance:** The same or similar vowel sound repeated in the stressed syllable of a word, followed by uncommon consonant sounds. Examples would be: *hate* and *sale*, or *drive* and *higher*.
- **Consonance:** The same or similar consonant sound repeated in the stressed syllable, preceded by uncommon vowel sounds. Examples: *urn* and *shorn*, or *irk* and *torque*.
- **Alliteration:** Repetition of sounds through more than one word or syllable. Example: Take the (extreme use of) the "L" sound that repeats in the following phrase— "The lurid letters of Lucy Lewis are luscious, lucid and libidinous."

All of these aural elements are mostly found within the lines of a poem rather than at the end. Sometimes they carry from one line to the next or over several lines. These are often used when a line or two seem to lack cohesion (the repeated sounds create structure) or to create a repeated set of sounds that will either A) stand apart from the words around them (because they are aurally different) or B) will make a pattern with their own sounds that can then be varied for emphasis. Take the use of alliteration as an example. The (rather simple) line above can easily illustrate two possibilities.

If the line came on the heels of something like:

The video clips taken by Frank in Louisville are dull but
the lurid letters of Lucy Lewis are luscious, lucid and libidinous.
Surely we haven't seen anything like them in years.

The alliteration in the second line makes it stand out from the others that surround it. Conversely, if we added a variance from the alliteration and made it:

The lurid letters of Lucy Lewis are luscious, crude and libidinous.

The emphasis is obviously on the word "crude," as it now stands apart from all the "L" sounds around it. It is important to remember when implementing any of these techniques that the goal of structure in a poem is to contain the poem, to allow order and chaos to co-exist.

If the structure becomes too apparent (to the point that it detracts from the experience of the poem, as in the "Lucy Lewis" example above,) it is doing its job poorly.

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