

The Ghost of Meter

Culture and Prosody in
American Free Verse
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sis of iambic pentameter associations and introducing another metrical mode that is significant throughout the rest of this study: the basically triple rhythm that I call, for convenience, *dactylic* (a discussion of this terminology appears on pages 39–40). Whitman developed connotations for the dactylic rhythm that persist throughout the rest of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries. His poems also occasion the introduction of two additional general concepts: the *embedded pentameter* and the *metapentameter*.

Chapter 4, an analysis of the poetry of Stephen Crane, opens with a discussion of the importance of triple rhythms in English and American poetry of the late nineteenth century and the ambivalence toward triple feet in criticism of the same period. Readings of Crane's extremely arhythmic poems extend metrical-code analysis to the level of the foot rather than that of the line. This chapter also introduces a subplot of the study, the development of free verse. It treats the possibility that the tension between iambic and dactylic rhythms in the late nineteenth century was a major factor in the emergence of free verse.

Chapter 5 traces the rise and fall of the first widespread wave of free verse in the early twentieth century, illustrating the extent of uneasiness with free verse by the time Eliot published his major works. This history offers one explanation for the success of Eliot's prosody, and serves as background for the analysis of his poetry. Eliot's use of iambic pentameter and dactylic rhythms evolves dramatically in his major poems, from an initial ambivalence toward both meters and the literary influences they represent, including that of Whitman, to simultaneous reconciliation with both meters in his last major poem, *Four Quartets*. Chapter 6 traces some recent prosodic developments in free verse, focusing on the work of Audre Lorde and Charles Wright, and suggests how the metrical code relates to contemporary poetics.

Chapter 1

Meter, Meaning, and the Metrical Code

While the metrical code combines elements from two earlier theories about meter and meaning, it differs from them in its emphasis on the expressive significance of traditional meter within individual lines of poems.¹ Previous critical thought about the relationship between meter and literary meaning may be categorized into three general theories:² the theory of propriety, the idea that certain meters inherently suit certain poetic themes or genres; the iconic theory, the idea that meter can reinforce a poem's meaning at particular points by adding expressive sound effects or by emphasizing particular words; and the frame theory, the idea that a meter constitutes a meaningful "contract" with the reader by evoking prior poems in the same meter.

The most ancient idea about meter and meaning in the Western tradition is the propriety theory. It holds that certain meters have inherent meaningful qualities suitable, or unsuitable, to particular kinds of thematic material. A historical overview of this idea can begin with Plato. Socrates, drawing an analogy between music and meter in the *Republic*, asks Adimantus to tell him which poetic rhythms suit a noble life: "what those rhythms would be, it is for you to tell us as you did the musical modes." When Adimantus is unable to say, Socrates continues, "We will take counsel with Damon, too, as to which are the feet appropriate to illiberality, and insolence or madness or other evils," and which for the opposite states of mind (645b–c).

Aristotle's implicit explanation, in the *Poetics*, of why certain meters are appropriate to certain literary situations explains little: the phenomenon is a result of "nature." Aristotle notes that, as soon as

speaking parts were introduced in tragedy, the meter changed from trochaic to iambic as “nature herself found the appropriate metre” (1449a). Discussing narrative poetry, he claims that “nature herself . . . teaches us to select the meter appropriate” to epic (1460a). In another passage he suggests, through the phrase “assigned it from experience,” that metrical roles developed through cultural practice over time, but even here the appropriateness of the meter is fundamentally self-evident: “As for [the meter of epic], the heroic has been assigned it from experience; were anyone to attempt a narrative poem in some one, or in several, of the other metres, the incongruity of the thing would be apparent” (1459b). Such metrical meaning appears implicitly to combine precedent [frame theory] with rhetorical effectiveness [iconic theory], although the writers who developed the propriety theory do not explain why or how meters derive their essences.³

Later classical writers continued to discuss which meters were appropriate for certain genres and rhetorical purposes. Arthur Glowka’s essay “The Function of Meter According to Ancient and Medieval Theory,” which offers a rare history of the development of ideas about meter and meaning, notes that Longinus contrasts the dactyl, which he considers fit for noble subjects, with other metrical feet such as pyrrhics and trochees (101). Quintilian “recommends the avoidance of trochees in argument, which give speed at the loss of force, but the use of dactyls and paeans for lofty passages and iambs for violence” (102). These writers emphasize rhetorical effectiveness more explicitly than do Plato and Aristotle, but they still assume, in Glowka’s words, a self-evident “generic propriety” (102).⁴

The association of certain meters with certain modes persisted throughout the medieval period, as Glowka observes, but with a new emphasis on moral significance:

The emotional power granted to rhythm by the ancients gains moral importance for medieval theorists when they see the capability of meter or rhythm to affect the motions of the soul, the center of sensation and cognition. A good rhythm can turn a soul to God; a bad one can send it to Satan . . . theories of *mimesis* (imitation) and decorum required styles of language to suit both the moral and social aspects of subject, scene, and character. (100)

Such attention to metrical decorum led to insights anticipating the later development of the iconic theory of meter. The sixth-century grammarian Priscian, for instance, argues that the metrical substitutions in Terence’s plays are admirable because they match meter to character. Terence’s naive or confused characters are likely to speak “in confused rhythms” (Glowka 104). In Priscian’s observation, the propriety theory of meter begins to shade into the iconic theory. There is a thin line between the idea that a confused rhythm is morally suitable for a confused speaker and the idea that such a rhythm effectively expresses the speaker’s character.

Prosodists of the English Renaissance continued to understand particular poetic devices as appropriate vehicles for certain moods or themes. Gascoigne’s “Certayne Notes of Instruction” (1575) concludes with an exhaustive list of prosodic/thematic correspondences.

As this riding rhyme serueth most aptly to wryte a merie tale, so Rhythme royall is fittest for a graue discourse. Ballades are beste in matters of loue, and rondlettes moste apt for the beating or handlyng of an adage or common prouerbe: Dizaynes and Sixaines for short Fantazies: Verlayes for an effectual proposition, although by the name you might otherwise judge of Verlayes; and the long verse of twelue and fouretene sillables, although it be now adayes vsed in all Theames, yet in my iudgement it would serue vest for Psalmes and Himpnes. (56–57)

Like the ancient writers, Gascoigne does not offer much explanation for his associations. He gives his own judgment as support for the last statement, but otherwise assumes that all these correspondences are obvious. Similarly, Sidney, comparing quantitative and accentual-syllabic prosody in “The Defence of Poesie,” assumes that metrical difference entails some self-evident difference in appropriate content. The quantitative meter is “more fit lively to express diverse passions, by the low or lofty sound of the well-weighed syllable” (207).

Eighteenth-century prosodists considered meter to have deep moral implications. Regular meter possessed the power to control the mind and regulate the passions. As it had in the Middle Ages, meter’s moral appropriateness verged on iconic meaning. Paul Fussell notes that meter at this period was thought to constitute “a revelation of

[the poet's] ethical and religious state" (*Theory of Prosody* 44). Poets of the period also explored the iconic effects of meter for purely artistic reasons, as in the famous passage from "An Essay on Criticism" where Pope simultaneously discusses and embodies iconic metrical devices:

The *Sound* must seem an *Echo* to the *Sense*.
Soft is the Strain when *Zephyr* gently blows,
 And the *smooth Stream* in *smoother Numbers* flows;
 But when loud Surges lash the sounding Shore,
 The *hoarse, rough Verse* shou'd like the *Torrent* roar.
 When *Ajax* strives, some *Rocks'* vast *Weight* to throw,
 The line too *labours*, and the *Words* move *slow*;
 Not so, when swift *Camilla* scours the Plain,
 Flies o'er the unbending *Corn*, and skims along the *Main*.

(155)

Samuel Johnson was critical of Pope's tour de force, noting that in the lines about Ajax "there is no particular heaviness, obstruction, or delay," and that "why the verse should be lengthened to express speed [in the last line], will not be easily discovered." He used this passage to exemplify his skepticism about iconic metrical variation, since Pope's effort embodied "what can be expected from the most diligent endeavors after this imagery of sound" (*Rambler* 92, 129). But Johnson also recognized the possibility that iconic meter could add a level of artistic value to poetry in addition to its moral function. He considers Virgil not "less happy in this than in the other graces of versification" (*Rambler* 92, 125), praises the use of "representative versification" in a line by Cowley ("Life of Cowley" 62), and lists several examples of iconic variation from Milton that he considers effective (*Rambler* 94, 140–41). In the section on "Prosody" in his *Dictionary*, however, Johnson makes no mention of the semantic potential of variations from the metrical norm and writes only of "the variations necessary to pleasure" (qtd. in Paul Fussell, "Note" 433).

The pleasure principle, or the aesthetic dimension of metrical variation as opposed to the iconic dimension, remained dominant in prosodic theory throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. George Saintsbury, the most influential writer on prosody of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, is known for his pioneering tolerance and admiration of numerous kinds of metrical vari-

ation and substitution. Saintsbury's praise of skillful metrical variation, however, rests on aesthetic grounds—the ability of metrical changes to alleviate monotony, to "swell and raise [the] rhythm" (*Historical Manual* 110). René Wellek places this attitude in the context of Saintsbury's more general separation of form and content:

[Saintsbury] resolutely divorces form from content, manner from matter, and often roundly condemns the subject matter while praising the form. . . . He proposes a strange mental experiment: "It must be a singularly feeble intellect and taste that cannot perform an easy dichotomy of metre and meaning. . . . You pour the poison or the ditchwater out; you keep and marvel at, the golden cup." (418)

Early twentieth-century writers on versification continue Saintsbury's focus on the aesthetic function of metrical variation, although they sometimes recognize the possibility of iconic meter. W. Winslow Hall's 1911 *English Poesy*, for instance, treats the subject of metrical irregularities in a chapter entitled "Poesial Variation: The Charm of Ordered Lawlessness." Hall praises various foot substitutions in Shakespeare with terms like "delightful," "a refreshing change," and "a relief from the tameness of invariable decasyllabics" (37).⁵ Twenty years later, R. F. Brewer's *The Art of Versification* treats the entire subject of "Imitative Harmony" in a short final chapter, just before the bibliography. This chapter discusses a few instances of iconic metrical variation among the treatments of alliteration, assonance, and consonance. Only one or two statements can be construed as metrical analysis (e.g., Tennyson pictures "the sense of chill cheerlessness by . . . harsh rhythm" [277]). Clement Wood's 1940 *Poets' Handbook* values metrical variation because it gives a sense of "natural conversational rhythm" (159), and advises aspiring poets to "vary constantly from the goose-step of the pattern scansion. Scan your own verses, and make sure that this variance is usual in them" (161). Like Saintsbury's aesthetically appealing rhythm, this varied conversational rhythm is an end in itself, with no iconic function in specific lines.

The theory of iconic metrical variation gained prominence with the development of the New Criticism in the United States in the thirties and forties. The new analytical literary theory, with its focus

on the autonomous literary text, entailed more scrutiny of metrical variation. Some New Critics explicitly analyzed the iconic effects of specific metrical variations at length, and the iconic theory of metrical meaning was central to the theory of the interdependence of form and content in poetry. Brooks and Warren's influential textbook *Understanding Poetry* (1938), "one of the chief means of introducing literature students to the close reading techniques and formalistic values of New Criticism" (Shucard, Moramarco, and Sullivan 224), treats metrical iconicity as a basic poetic device. In exercises at the ends of chapters, students are asked to apply the iconic theory to poems: "Scan lines 42–52 of 'Lucy Gray.' Is the metrical pattern in these lines used effectively to support the rhetorical pattern?" (134). "Scan lines 39–42 of 'Preludes.' How does the metrical effect support the meaning here?" (138). Brooks and Warren's readings of poems abound with such observations as "the heavy pause after *silence* gives the effect of the speaker's meditating a moment" and "this heavy emphasis on *long* fortifies the meaning of the word" (118–19). Having gone full circle from Saintsbury, they chastise severely a poem in which "the metrical pattern is emphasized, apparently, as an end in itself" (115).

By midcentury, the iconic theory was so established that Northrop Frye notes, in *Anatomy of Criticism*, that "most of [the imitative devices] in English are too familiar to need recapitulation here: beheaded lines increase speed, trochaic rhythms suggest falling movement, and so on" (98). Paul Fussell's popular *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (1965) lists as givens three basic "principles of expression through metrical variation": spondees "can reinforce effects of slowness, weight, or difficulty," pyrrhics contribute to effects of "rapidity, lightness, or ease," and "an unanticipated reversal in the rhythm . . . implies a sudden movement . . . or a new direction of thought, a new tone of voice, or a change or intensification of poetic address" (42).

One distinctive modification of the iconic theory appears in Antony Easthope's 1983 study, *Poetry as Discourse*. Easthope discusses meter's implications from a political and social perspective and treats the iambic pentameter tradition as a whole, not just the meter of individual poems or kinds of poems. Easthope's linking the physical nature of iambic pentameter to cultural meaning carries the iconic theory to its ultimate conclusion, analyzing the metrical pattern itself rather than variations from it. According to Easthope, iambic pen-

tameter evens out intonation along the length of the line, forces slow, formal, controlled pronunciation, and encourages "syntagmatic" thinking because it allows syntax to cross line breaks. All of this contributes, in his view, to the formation and maintenance of the bourgeois personality and aids in political repression. Easthope, whose theory remarkably resembles Samuel Johnson's idea that meter regulates the passions, emphasizes the importance of meter's iconic function in forming no less than in expressing the self.

The iconic theory is open to criticism on the same grounds as other kinds of formalism. The analysis of metrical iconicity can seem subjective or even arbitrary, since metrical effects may derive their meaning from the reader's knowledge of the words of the poem. On the other hand, if meter is thought to have meaning completely apart from the words, iconic readings run the risk of naive, mystical essentialism. As evidence for the latter point, I. A. Richards in *Practical Criticism* presents a metrically accurate imitation of Milton's "On the Morning of Christ's Nativity" in nonsense words beginning "J. Drootan-Sussting Benn . . ." On the evidence of this poetic "double or dummy," Richards points out that accepting the collaboration between meter and meaning is more reasonable than trying to ignore it:

Such arguments . . . do not tend to diminish the power of the sound (the inherent rhythm) *when it works in conjunction with sense and feeling* . . . so much mystery and obscurity has already been raised around this relation by talk about the *identity* of Form and Content, or about the extirpation of the Matter in the Form, that we are in danger of forgetting how natural and inevitable their cooperation must be. (220–22)

D. I. Sims makes the same point when he observes that to consider rhythms as having meaning separately from the rest of the meaning of the poem "is the way to unhappy frenzy" (352). Reuven Tsur, recognizing that iconic meter may become a self-fulfilling prophecy—"the same meter may interact in different poems with different elements . . . but it will always 'admirably' suit the quality of which it is a perceptual condition"—develops a more sophisticated model of the relation between rhythm and meaning; he discusses the "combinational potentials" of metrical, syntactical, and thematical ele-

ments in poems (416). John Crowe Ransom, notorious for his skepticism about the iconic theory, claims that belief in the iconic function of "the phonetic effect in a poem . . . is almost completely fallacious" ("Wanted: An Ontological Critic" 38).⁶

In spite of its problems, the iconic theory continues to influence poetics, and research in poetics, more than any other idea about metrical meaning. Marina Tarlinskaja's statistical analysis of "rhythmical deviations" shows that certain semantic categories occur at a definitely higher frequency in conjunction with metrical variations (27). She suggests a significant alteration in traditional iconic theory, postulating that metrical variations have become associated with their particular meanings through literary convention and are not inherently expressive (30–31). Mark Jacob leaves open the question of whether meter "can be called, in any meaningful sense, semantic" (92). Nonetheless he remarks, for instance, of a line in Pushkin: "it can hardly be an accident that the line which describes the coach's accident occurs . . . at the moment of a breakdown in a fundamental law of rhythmic structure" (89). F. K. Diering claims that "once a basic meter has been established, any deviation from it may become rhetorically significant" (39); in D. H. Lawrence's "Piano," for example, "the rhythmic effect is closely allied to the meaning and supports it" (37).

The most significant contemporary theory about the relation between meter and meaning, the frame theory, was developed most fully in two essays by John Hollander, "The Metrical Emblem" (1959)—since expanded and retitled "The Metrical Frame"—and "Romantic Verse Form and the Metrical Contract" (1965).⁷ The frame theory arose at the time in literary criticism when rhetorical considerations about the interaction between writer and reader began to supersede formalism. It emphasizes the importance of the knowledge and previous associations a reader brings to the meter of a poem. "To analyze the meter of a poem," according to Hollander,

is not so much to scan it as to show with what other poems its less significant (linguistically speaking) formal elements associate it; to chart out its mode; to trace its family tree by appeal to those resemblances which connect it, in some ways with one, in some ways with another kind of poem that may, historically, precede or follow it. (*Vision and Resonance* 162)

The "metrical contract" between poet and reader is based on such family resemblances.

Hollander refers to the romantic period as a "metrical crisis," a period when "it appears that the contract of meter has been broken." Not surprisingly, he develops the frame theory most fully in relation to romantic verse form (202–3). In fact, the frame theory's first foreshadowings occurred at the beginning of the romantic period, a time of wide metrical experimentation and distance from established metrical traditions. These factors may have led to greater awareness of the historical and cultural aspects of meter among the Romantics themselves. In the "Preface" to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth notes the historical implications of meter. One aspect of metrical effect is "the blind association of pleasure which has been previously received from works of rhyme or meter of the same or similar construction" (150).

When Hollander refers to metrical conventions as a poem's "less significant (linguistically speaking) formal elements," he refers to a distinctive characteristic of the frame theory, its focus on consistent poetic elements whose significance has rarely been acknowledged. Hollander points out that metrical conventions tend to be "ignored or treated at best as an unexamined *donnée*, a given condition," since "within the framework of information theory, it is certainly true that the more surprising event is the more significant one." In the analysis of poems, however, the opposite is often true, and "conventional events are of major importance" (*Vision* 139). The frame theory's focus on meter's conventionality leads to analysis of poems on the basis of initial metrical choices. Hollander's discussion of Blake, for instance, centers on the literary implications of Blake's use of the alexandrine as a metrical frame.

With the recent interest in cultural criticism, Hollander's idea of the metrical frame has grown in influence. Two doctoral dissertations of the 1980s make use of the idea for widely differing purposes. James Shapiro's prosodic analysis of Marlowe's metrical style includes a discussion of the ways in which Marlowe's extension of the range of dramatic blank verse established "a new metrical contract for blank verse" (64). In a more extended treatment of the theoretical implications of particular choices of verse forms, Kevin Lewis examines Blake's fourteener and Auden's tetrameter couplet in view of the historical associations of those meters.

The metrical code is intimately related to the frame theory, since

it concentrates on meter as a cultural artifact that evokes previous literary associations and relates a poem to a poetic lineage. Like the iconic theory, however, the metrical-code theory interprets special cases rather than conventions, analyzing the interaction between meter and meaning line by line or even foot by foot within a poem. Within the long and growing tradition of free verse, traditional metrical patterns are no longer conventional events; they are rare and surprising, and have significance "within the framework of information theory."

As distinct from the metrical frame, the metrical-code theory concentrates on the information value of specific occurrences of metrical patterns within a poem. The word *code* implies that meter in a metrically organic poem can function like a language, carrying different information at different points within a poem. Since semantic content interacts differently with meter from line to line or passage to passage of the same work, metrical associations create their own layer of literary meaning as they develop throughout a poem. Like other aspects of poetic meaning, a metrical-code pattern is relevant in at least three contexts: it can add to the meaning of a particular poem, add to the understanding of the development of one poet's work, and illuminate the relation between one poet and another.

Perhaps most importantly, the metrical code also sheds light on what is to me the essence and *raison d'être* of poetry: the mysterious connections between speech patterns, the body's memory of rhythm, and the individual and cultural unconscious. In his study of metrical development during the Renaissance, John Thompson proposes that, from the very beginning, to write effectively in accentual-syllabic meter involved an awareness of the gap between language and meter (152). The metrical code depends on the manipulation of meaning, in one apparently self-referential line of poetry, across this subtle gap.

While it is possible that simultaneous echoes of other meters may evoke metrical-code associations in metrically regular poems, this study concentrates only on free verse and metrically variable poems—the two kinds of poems in which meters are available for expressive as opposed to strictly conventional purposes. Theoretically, the metrical code can apply to the work of metrically flexible poets in any tradition, but the strength and continuity of free verse in the United States over the past hundred and fifty years make American poetry a particularly appropriate subject for metrical-code readings.

Chapter 2

Dickinson and Patriarchal Meter: A Theory of the Metrical Code

Emily Dickinson's metrics are an area of remarkable tension. Methodologically as well as chronologically, her work offers an especially good starting point for a study of the metrical code in American poetry. Iambic pentameter is apparent in few of Dickinson's poems, but it structures the metrical identity of those poems and adds its singular force to some of her best-known works. Because of her unusual historical position and passionate, involved poetic struggle, Dickinson is an ideal subject for the study of how meter encodes information about a poem's relation to contemporaneous influences, traditions, and societal attitudes and to the poetic past and its supporting social structures.

Dickinson's poetry offers an appropriate text within which to examine iambic pentameter as a meaningful code because she chose this highly connotative meter only occasionally and unpredictably. Critics have often noted and discussed Dickinson's use of the ballad or hymn stanza, but they have paid little attention to her use of iambic pentameter, due to an inadequate understanding of the cultural and historical resonances of this meter.¹ Critics such as Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar who have studied the relation of female writers to a male tradition have laid the groundwork for a useful hermeneutical approach to what iambic pentameter may "mean" in Dickinson's poems. Iambic pentameter codifies the force exerted on Dickinson's poetry by patriarchal poetic tradition (she associates the meter with the power of religion and public opinion, with formality, and with stasis), and her handling of it demonstrates her attitudes toward that

Notes

Chapter 1

1. More than one writer has noted the possibility of the metrical code, but none has developed it explicitly at length. Dennis Taylor mentions the metrical code in his book on Hardy's meter: "I . . . assume that a traditional line may carry with it associations which remain when the line is combined with other types of lines in a complex stanza" (77-78). Gingell, analyzing how the Canadian poet A. M. Klein uses versification "to reinforce thematic statement" (15), notes that Klein used individual lines of iambic pentameter to evoke the British poetic tradition.

2. A fourth theory about meter and meaning, which may be called *artifice*—the idea that poems gain a level of meaning from the mere fact of their metricality—has been mentioned by twentieth-century theorists including I. A. Richards, Victor Hamm, and Paul Fussell. Richards noted in 1925 that meter sets a poem apart "through its very appearance of artificiality" (*Principles* 145). Fussell summarizes the artifice theory as the idea that "meter, by distinguishing rhythmic from ordinary statement, objectifies that statement and impels it in the direction of a significant formality and even ritualism" (*Poetic Meter* 14). Hamm writes that meter "has a meaning, if only the meaning of an established order" (700). The artifice theory may be too general for any theorist to discuss at length, although it influenced Hollander's development of the frame theory (*Vision* 135-36).

Overviews of the relation between meter and meaning usually emphasize the iconic and frame theories. Szerdahelyi, for example, distinguishes between the two ideas by borrowing Charles Peirce's concepts of symbol and icon: meter functions as an iconic sign when it imitates the phenomena the poem describes, and as a symbolic sign when it "evoke[s] in us the atmosphere, feelings and ideals of the world in which it . . . originated and flourished." The hexameter, for instance, evokes

classical culture (80-81). Tarlinskaja concentrates on the iconic theory, demonstrating in detail how "deviations" from the general metrical model of the text may "perform the function of italics emphasizing words semantically valuable for the poet or . . . functionally approach sound imitation, iconically reproducing kinetic or acoustic images" (1-2). She also describes an association exemplifying the frame theory in her discussion of "historical" connections between form and meaning: "trochaic trimeter rhymed feminine-masculine-feminine-masculine is strongly associated in the Russian literary tradition with the theme "unhappy childhood or death in a rural setting" (1).

3. With the benefit of hindsight, a modern scholar such as Raven can imply, on the other hand, that the Greeks used anapestic meter when there was movement on the stage because it was traditionally a marching meter (11).

4. At least one writer of antiquity did apply the iconic theory as well as the propriety theory. Johnson notes that Dionysius of Halicarnassus in the first century B.C. described how Homer's hexameters expressed "length of time, bulk of body, . . . brevity, speed," and other characteristics "by the sound of the syllables" (*De Compositione Verborum*, trans. and qtd. in Johnson, *Rambler* 123). Johnson is skeptical of Dionysius' claims: "either he was fanciful, or we have lost the genuine pronunciation" (*Rambler* 124).

5. Late in the chapter, Hall verges on the iconic theory in his remark that Shakespeare made an "intuitive choice of precisely those rhythmic regularities and irregularities which could best express his emotion and his thought" (44). He supports this claim, however, with only a half paragraph of general discussion: "the reversal [trochaic substitution] . . . startles us and charms," "consecutive stresses [spondees] . . . give a refreshing variety, and slow the march of thought," and "omitted stresses . . . give rapidity and fluidity to a line" (44-45). In each of these instances, an emphasis on aesthetic appeal ("charms," "refreshing," "fluidity") tempers the discussion of iconic function with aesthetic considerations.

6. For a general critique of the claims of stylistics, please see Fish.

7. Both essays are now included in Hollander's *Vision and Resonance*. In related work, Greenblatt discusses how "genre can exert a powerful influence on the metrical stylistic feature of complexity" (23). He finds that Donne and Jonson, for instance, use high levels of substitution for the expected metrical pattern in their satires, very low levels in house poems and funeral elegies, and a middle range in love poems. Not only particular generic traditions but the influence of individual poets have been found to affect metrical associations; Kenneth Gross finds that Mil-

ton's use of the hexameter reflects a consciousness of Spenser's previous associations with the line.

Chapter 2

1. Among those who have discussed Dickinson's hymn stanza, see especially Thomas Johnson 84-120; Whicher 165-69, 240-42; Porter 51-74; Wolosky 14-17; and Lindberg-Seyersted 129-56, 161-62.

2. Joanne Feit Diehl develops the idea in her book *Dickinson and the Romantic Imagination* (esp. 7-10, 13-33, and 82-83) and in her article "Dickinson and Bloom."

3. Clark Griffin calls this tactic "the cruellest kind of irony" (66).

4. See Gilbert and Gubar, *Madwoman* 587-94; Juhasz, *Naked* 13, 31; Mossberg, esp. 74-82; and Cheryl Walker 87-94, 109-11, for discussions of Dickinson in relation to other female "singers" of the time. The idea of Dickinson's intimate consciousness of the object is interestingly developed in Homans ("Oh, Vision") and in Wolosky 165-66.

5. By contrast, Barton Levi St. Armand has a valuable and original explanation of Dickinson's use of the hymn stanza. He discusses her as a folk poet and her poems as "art hymns," exploring the connection between this aspect of her work and various contemporaneous art forms (158-60).

6. Ruth Miller argues that Dickinson may very well have read Whitman in spite of this claim (65-67). See also Keller 251-93. For further discussion of Dickinson in relation to other writers see Sewall 1:678; Whicher 214-16; and Capps 23-24, 60-66, 83-92, 113-15, 134-35. Dickinson even sewed a sampler with an iambic-pentameter poem in 1845 (Leyda 1:99). Dickinson's resistance to iambic pentameter is still more remarkable in the light of Bogus's view that an "ingested remembrance of Elizabeth Barrett Browning as teacher" is "at the heart of Dickinson's poetics" (44) and Walsh's claim that Dickinson borrowed extensively from Barrett Browning (98-109). Vivian Pollak's article on the valentines Dickinson wrote shows that she was both knowledgeable and ambivalent about the Augustan poetic conventions, parodying the forms and attitudes that most attracted her.

7. I base my criteria for the metricality of a ten-syllable line on Halle and Keyser, as follows:

inverted feet [trochees] appear only under the following three conditions in an iambic pentameter line: verse initially, after a stressed syllable . . . , and after a major syntactic boundary . . . across which the subordination rules of English do not operate. (231)

Babette Deutsch claims that "a trochee might be substituted for an iamb