**Pattern and Variation in Poetry**

**Summary:** A brief rundown on the basic concepts of pattern and variation and how they can be used when writing poems.

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**Pattern and Variation, Generally Considered**

There are two factors battling for poets' attention when they sit down to write a poem: chaos and control. Classically, these factors are attributed to Dionysus (the *Dionysian* or *chaotic* aspects) and Apollo (the *Apollonian* or *formal* aspect of poetry.) Just as the two Greek gods of poetry were Apollo and Dionysus, any great poem has elements of both chaos and control.

A poem uses the formal (sound and visual) aspects of language to control the chaotic (meaningful and expressive) aspects of language. Like the lead bars used to control a nuclear reaction on the verge of exploding, form is used to control and curb language to make it digestible, more powerful and contained for the reader. Since, as everyday language users, we are probably more familiar with the Dionysian frustrations of language (who has not uttered the phrase, "I don't know; it's hard to put into words"?) our focus will be on the Apollonian or formal aspects of a poem.

This doesn't mean that we should not let some chaos into the poem, of course (both Apollo and Dionysus have to have their say, after all), but since a poem is a structured thing and we can't "control" the chaotic aspect, per se by any means than by imposing structure on it, then it makes sense that we should talk largely about the structural, formal aspects, as those are the parts that we can control. And although we are talking about form and structure, it should be said that too much control (Apollo having too much say) risks forcing the poem into shape, and the poem created in such circumstances will very often be stilted and the structure will weigh the poem down. It's a risk we have to take, but being aware that a heavy-handed structure can ruin a poem just as fast as a lack of structure will hopefully keep our writing balanced and in that delicate middle ground where the best poetry happens.

In the making of a poem, pattern is one of the most important ways of building form and structure, and one of the most difficult to master. In classical verse, pattern was established by using a traditional form and meter, where lines had set numbers of beats and rhymes and alliteration came at predictable places within the line (typically at the end in the case of rhyme, within the line in the case of alliteration in Anglo-Saxon and Norse poetry). Nowadays, as most readers and writers of poetry know, most poetry written in English is free verse, rather than in traditional forms, and this presents a unique set of problems.

**The Unique Problem of Free Verse**

Since free verse poets cannot rely on the authority of an accepted "classical" form, they must develop an authority through consistency and pattern and variance. The word "authority" may prick the ears of many poets, as it seems too definitive and demanding. All it means here is that the poem is a made thing, a built thing, if you will, and its "authority" is its commanding presence or ability to accurately relay itself to the reader.

A standard reader feels authority in a good poem more than thinks about it, and a writer builds a poem to the needs of itself—its authority comes through when the poet has found the poem's form. If we "read like writers" then we must think a lot about how a poem derives its authority, as we set out to do something similar in our own work. What this all means is that a solid study of pattern and variation in a poem is necessary if a poet intends to make a poem that is sturdy in its structure without relying on an overtly consistent (read: strictly metered and rhymed) form. Especially for free verse poets, who can't rely on conventions to derive their authority. The poet should always be asking "what is the best vehicle to relay this poem?"

When talking about pattern, there is a lot of crossover to a discussion of classical form and meter. Pattern and variation are general categories that include the more traditional subjects of *scansion*, *sound* and *prosody* that deal with the sound of the poem (what we'll call *aural pattern*) but also the matters of how the poem looks on the page (what we'll call *visual pattern*).

So two kinds of pattern will be evaluated, and both give the poet and opportunity to assert Apollo's hand onto a poem at an opportune time. But before getting into specifics, we must define what we mean by pattern, generally, and how variation effects a poem once a pattern is established.

**Eye Training: Visual Patterning**

**Summary:** A brief exploration of the various visual aspects that can be utilized when making a poem. If the crafting of the aural aspects of a poem is what we may call "ear training," the crafting of the visual aspects is what we'd call "eye training."

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We've [already claimed](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/568/01/) that pattern in a poem is "The artistic arrangement and use of the material (aural and visual) aspects of words into particular repetitive and/or serial forms as a means to structure a poem." The combination of sound and visual elements provides a poem's *structure*, the resultant sum of all sound and visual form in a poem. The craft of poetry has traditionally concerned itself only with the sounds of the words, but as a *written* thing, we cannot deny that there is also a certain "paginess" to a poem, and that the patterns developed in that visual field can't be overlooked if we are to concern ourselves with the full potential of the poem's structure.

Whereas the aural patterns of a poem are concerned largely with the rhythm and tone of the words (the horizontal and vertical axis on the musical scale, respectively,) visual pattern and variation are more geared more toward the poem's placement on the page than in the way it sounds when read. Where the aural aspects of the words are more concerned with how the words sound when read in time, the visual aspects are more concerned with how the words look when revealed in space. Like a painter at a canvas, the poet whose concern is the visual patterning of the poem looks at how the thing sits on the white canvas of the blank page and how that visual structure creates patterns that can be used to create a richer poem**.**

**Bearing this in mind, we ask a few questions:**

* **What is visual pattern?**
* **What are the visual aspects of a poem that can be varied and patterned?**
* **How do we vary a visual pattern?**
* **What are the uses of variation in a poem?**

**Definition:**

**Visual pattern:** The artistic arrangement and use of the visual aspects of words into particular repetitive and/or serial forms as a means to create structure in a poem. Prominent places to look at visual pattern include verbal, grammatical, syntactical, linear, stanzaic and sectional elements within a poem.

**What is Visual Pattern?**

**Visual pattern is, then:** The artistic arrangement and use of the visual aspects of words into particular repetitive and/or serial forms as a means to create structure in a poem. Said another way, visual pattern is any recurring or consistent visual aspect of a poem. Since the whole visual field of the poem on the page is available, we must break down some of the aspects of that field into workable pieces. Since the standard elements of written language are letters, diphthongs, words, phrases, sentences, paragraphs and sections, then we must break down our visual patterns into similar elements, with a few exceptions.

In working with visual pattern, the goal is to relax the eye, so to speak, so that the page can be read "at a glance," therefore allowing the visual aspect to come forward. Thinking of the words as being in a field, or *whitespace*, as it's commonly called, will help you see the different aspects of visual pattern.

Of course, recurrence and predictability are the basis of pattern. This includes words, phrases, sentences, and other grammar-based variations. But rather than dealing with the more obvious uses of repetition on the letter and diphthong level, we start with the recurrence of words on a page, which can be easily scanned and seen. Since a poem has some qualities that are unique only to poetry, namely line and stanza, they are also possible places to seek repetition and subsequently pattern. This leads us to ask...

**What are the aspects of a poem that can be varied and patterned?**

Visual pattern can arise in the verbal, grammatical, syntactical, linear, stanzaic or sectional elements of a poem. This list is by no means exhaustive, but in order to create an art of visual pattern, we have to put the breaks on somewhere. The reader is encouraged to discover other visual elements within a poem, but for our purposes here, we stop at these six terms. Below is a description of each of these elements, in order of small to large physical presence on the page.

**Verbal:** A verbal pattern is a pattern that derives from word choice. Verbal patterns arise in the common letter configurations and repetition of certain words. Take as an example Edgar Alan Poe's well known poem "Annabel Lee" (and I use this poem because it makes its patterns obvious— with free verse poetry the patterns are typically more subtle.):

**It was many and many a year ago,   
In a kingdom by the sea,   
That a maiden there lived whom you may know   
By the name of ANNABEL LEE;—   
And this maiden she lived with no other thought   
Than to love and be loved by me.   
  
She was a child and I was a child,   
In this kingdom by the sea,   
But we loved with a love that was more than love—   
I and my Annabel Lee—   
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven   
Coveted her and me.   
  
And this was the reason that, long ago,   
In this kingdom by the sea,   
A wind blew out of a cloud by night   
Chilling my Annabel Lee;   
So that her high-born kinsman came   
And bore her away from me,   
To shut her up in a sepulchre   
In this kingdom by the sea.   
  
The angels, not half so happy in Heaven,   
Went envying her and me:—   
Yes! that was the reason (as all men know,   
In this kingdom by the sea)   
That the wind came out of a cloud, chilling   
And killing my Annabel Lee.   
But our love it was stronger by far than the love   
Of those who were older than we—   
Of many far wiser than we-   
And neither the angels in Heaven above,   
Nor the demons down under the sea,   
Can ever dissever my soul from the soul   
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee:—   
  
For the moon never beams without bringing me dreams   
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;   
And the stars never rise but I see the bright eyes   
Of the beautiful Annabel Lee;   
And so, all the night-tide, I lie down by the side   
Of my darling, my darling, my life and my bride,   
In her sepulchre there by the sea—   
In her tomb by the side of the sea.**

Comparing the first two stanzas, there is an obvious verbal pattern in the repetition of the word "many" in the first line of the first stanza and "child" in the first line of the second stanza. Also note the pattern of ending the stanzas with the word "me" (this is not continued throughout the poem, although he does end a few more lines with "me", and varies the word with "we" in the 5th stanza, thus placing emphasis on "we.") What other verbal patterns are there?

**Grammatical:** Grammatical patterns are found in placement of punctuation or repetition of similar grammatical units (ie: two lines with similar use of independent clauses). This also includes syntactical function ("function" meaning: does the sentence ask a question, make a statement etc...(this is with grammatical patterns because of the fact that they end with a specific punctuation)). We also include conventions such as capitalization, italics, boldfacing etc. here. In the Poe poem above note his convention (developed very well by the end of the poem) of beginning lines with prepositional phrases, most often "of" phrases.

**Syntactical:** Syntactical pattern arises when two or more sentences have similar verbal and grammatical patterns (thus making them seems similar in content and construction), have similar length or repeat identically the same sentence. The line "A wind blew out of a cloud by night" in stanza three line three, and the line "That the wind came out of a cloud, chilling" in stanza four line five, are an obvious syntactical repetition— with the variation in the fourth stanza putting emphasis on the word "chilling." In some ways, building from the smallest elements to the largest, it seems obvious that a combination of verbal and grammatical pattern leads to syntactical pattern.

**Linear:** Patterns that occur in the line are found primarily in how the line ends and visually how far the lines extends. The first aspect of linear pattern looks at whether the line is end-stopped, end-paused or enjambed. An end-stopped line ends with hard punctuation, typically a period, comma, dash or semi-colon. An end-paused line is one that breaks between phrases. Enjambed lines break the phrase and often contain internal punctuation. Thus instead of:

**It was many and many a year ago,   
In a kingdom by the sea,   
That a maiden there lived whom you may know   
By the name of ANNABEL LEE;—**

which has 2 end-stopped lines, an end-paused line and then an end-stopped line, we might have:

**It was many and   
many a year ago, in   
a kingdom by   
the sea, that a maiden there   
lived whom you may   
know by the name of   
ANNABEL LEE;—**

which has all enjambed lines (except the last). Visually, the ends of the end-stopped lines are obvious (by recognition of punctuation), and the visual difference between the end-paused and enjambed lines is that often, because the enjambment breaks against the phrase, a line will end with a preposition, article or conjunction, as happens in the enjambed example above. The second aspect of linear pattern involves how far the lines extend visually on the page. This may or may not relate to the aural pattern (a line with many beats might be very short visually, or vice versa). Take, for example, the fact that the third and the fifth lines in the first stanza of Poe's poem both extend to a nearly equal length toward the right margin.

**Stanzaic:** A regular or repetitive number of lines within a poem's stanzas is the first order of stanzaic pattern. The second is the combination of verbal, grammatical, syntactical and linear elements that fall in common locations from stanza to stanza.

On the first order of stanzaic pattern, we can say that a poem that has, say, regular four line stanzas throughout or that goes back and forth between a four line and a five line stanza has stanzaic visual pattern. But also keeping with the notion of serial pattern, as well, we must admit that a poem that goes from a two line stanza to a three line stanza to a four line stanza (or any such pattern, the possibilities are endless) has serial stanzaic visual patterning. Poe uses stanzaic variations throughout to show emphasis. He first establishes a six line stanza in the first two stanzas, varies it in the third stanza, returns to it in the fourth, varies it slightly in the fifth and then departs wildly from it in the sixth.

The second order of stanzaic pattern is the combination of verbal, grammatical, syntactical and linear elements that fall in common locations from stanza to stanza. So if we look at the first two stanzas:

It was many and many a year ago,  
In a kingdom by the sea,   
That a maiden there lived whom you may know   
By the name of ANNABEL LEE;—   
And this maiden she lived with no other thought   
Than to love and be loved by me.   
  
She was a child and I was a child,   
In this kingdom by the sea,   
But we loved with a love that was more than love—   
I and my Annabel Lee—   
With a love that the winged seraphs of heaven   
Coveted her and me.

we can point out that (and again, this is by no means exhaustive) there is grammatical pattern that carries across both stanzas (thus making it also a stanzaic rather than a simply grammatical pattern) in the repeated commas at the ends of lines one and two in both stanzas, as well as the dash in line four of both (and the variation of the dash in line three of the second stanza). The repeated phrase "In a kingdom by the sea," in the second line of each stanza is a syntactical pattern as well as a stanzaic pattern because it is repeated across stanzas (it would be simple a syntactical pattern if it occurred within the same stanza). The repetition of the name Annabell Lee in the forth line of both stanzas is a verbal pattern made across stanzas, thus leading to a stanzaic pattern (although the change from all caps to standard capitalization in the second stanza is a grammatical variation).

**Sectional**: In a multi-sectioned poem, the patterns made by all of the above elements throughout the sections can make a consistent pattern. If we wrote a poem with sections and each section consisted of four three-lined stanzas ("tersets"), each with all lines end-stopped, every sentence being declarative, every sentence beginning with a preposition...this would show a tremendous amount of sectional pattern. Obviously "Annabel Lee" is not a sectioned poem, and therefore doesn't provide an example of this type of pattern. For some of the best examples of this type of pattern and variation, look into Joseph Brodsky's longer, sectioned poems.

**Ear Training: Sound and Meter**

**Introduction to Sound and Meter**

Having defined pattern in poetry as "The artistic arrangement and use of the material (aural and visual) aspects of words into particular repetitive and/or serial forms as a means to structure a poem," and having [discussed visual pattern elsewhere](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/569/01/), we turn to those aspects of poetics that are probably most familiar to us, sound and meter. Whereas the visual aspects of poetry are "read at a glance," so to speak, the aural aspects are read in time, like music.

As said before, when most people think of poetry, the first things they think of are sound and meter. For thousands of years, poetic form has been defined by its cadence, its sing-song rhythms, and its sound effects. That is still true today, except now we include the visual aspects of the poem and we often do not subscribe to a set meter and rhyme pattern when we write. Poetry that does not use a set meter is called *free verse* poetry, but the phrase can be deceptive.

While it is true that free verse poetry does not subscribe to the set meters and forms that defined earlier forms of verse, it must still deal with these elements. While on the surface it may seem that free verse has pulled the poet away from the sound elements in a poem, in reality it has made the poet's task more complex. Since poets are now free to irregularly change the rhythms and sounds throughout a poem, they have many more choices to make with every word put on the page. T. S. Eliot said in his essay "The Music of Poetry" in 1942 that "no verse is free for the man who wants to do a good job", and, although written 60 years ago, it still holds true. The early 20th century changed forever the way we look at poetic form, but the traditions of sound and meter still hold a firm place in the poetic arts.

The words *sound* and *meter* are difficult to define and have many different aspects. Because of these difficulties, perhaps it is useful to think of these terms in the language of metaphor. If you think of the aural elements of a poem in terms of musical notation, you could think of meter as the rhythm created by the words (the horizontal movement of a piece of music, cutting up time into bigger or smaller increments) and sound as the notes of the piece of music (or the vertical movement, repeating sounds and syllables to create a "melody.") Each of these two elements are complex and require an in-depth definition. First, let's start with meter.

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**Meter and Scansion**

**Meter**

The bible of most poets today regarding meter and sound is a book by Paul Fussell called *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form*. Although some of Fussell's ideas are a bit outdated (namely, he doesn't deal with the visual elements of a poem), his approach is complete, concise and useful. Fussell defines meter as "what results when the natural rhythmical movements of colloquial speech are heightened, organized, and regulated so that [repetition] emerges from the relative phonetic haphazard of ordinary utterance." (4-5) To "meter" something, then, is to "measure" it (the word *meter* itself is derived from the Greek for *measure*), and there are four common ways to view meter.

* **Syllabic:** A general counting of syllables per line.
* **Accentual:** A counting of accents only per line. Syllables may vary between accents.
* **Accentual-syllabic:** A counting of syllables and accents.
* **Quantitative:** Measures the duration of words.

Of the ways of looking at meter, the most common in English are those that are accentual. English, being of Germanic origin, is a predominantly *accentual* language. This means that its natural rhythms are not found naturally from syllable to syllable, but rather from one accent to the next. There may be one, two, or three syllables between accents (or more, but this is a matter of debate). For this reason most English language poets opt to look at their own meter as **accentual** or **accentual-syllabic**. The former is the more common; adherence to the latter often leads an English language poet toward self-conscious verse, as their predictable rhythms are counter to natural English speech (not that it is impossible to create great verse with this technique, but there is a *tendency* for it to end up so).

To get a bearing on what these rhythms look and sound like, let's start with a method for writing out the rhythms of a poem. This technique is called scansion, and it is important because it puts visual markers onto an otherwise entirely *heard* phenomenon.

**Scansion**

There are three kinds of scansion: the *graphic*, the *musical* and the *acoustic*. Since the most commonly and most easily used is graphic, we will use it in our discussion. For a discussion of the others, I refer you to Fussell, page 18. To begin to look at graphic scansion, we first must look at a couple of symbols that are used to scan a poem.

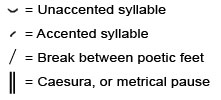


Image Caption: Scanison Symbols

Syllables can either be **accented**, meaning they are naturally given more emphasis when spoken, or **unaccented**, meaning they receive less emphasis when spoken. A **poetic foot** is a unit of accented and unaccented syllables that is repeated or used in sequence with others to form the meter. A **caesura** is a long pause in the middle of a line of poetry.

To show an example of these symbols, let's look at a poem written with the less common, the **accentual-syllabic** meter, in mind. Here are three scanned lines from Dante Gabriel Rossetti's "Autumn Idleness":

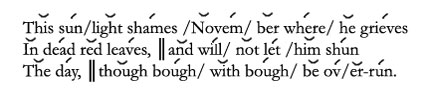


Image Caption:

You can then see, when comparing the reading of the poem to the scansion marks, how they compare. These lines are taken from a sonnet and thus somewhat predictably written in **iambic pentameter**. They thus have five accents per line and their syllable counts are 10/10/10. The term **iambic pentameter** often comes up in discussions of Shakespeare or any sonneteer, but the meaning of the term is often mistaken or simply overlooked. Defining iambic pentameter helps us break down two important parts of meter: **poetic feet** and **line length**.

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**Poetic Feet and Line Length**

**Poetic Feet**

There are two parts to the term **iambic pentameter**. The first part refers to the type of **poetic foot** being used predominantly in the line. A poetic foot is a basic repeated sequence of meter comprised of two or more accented or unaccented syllables. In the case of an **iambic foot**, the sequence is "unaccented, accented". There are other types of poetic feet commonly found in English language poetry.

The primary feet are referred to using these terms (an example word from Fussell's examples is given next to them):

* **Iambic:** destroy (unaccented/accented)
* **Anapestic:** intervene (unaccented/unaccented/accented)
* **Trochaic:** topsy (accented/unaccented)
* **Dactylic:** merrily (accented/unaccented/unaccented)

The substitutive feet (feet not used as primary, instead used to supplement and vary a primary foot) are referred to using these terms:

* **Spondaic:** hum drum (accented/accented)
* **Pyrrhic:** the sea/ son of/ mists (the "son of" in the middle being unaccented/unaccented)

The second part of defining **iambic pentameter** has to do with line length.

**Line Length**

The poetic foot then shows the placement of accented and unaccented syllables. But the second part of the term, **pentameter**, shows the number of feet per line. In the case of **pentameter**, there are basically five feet per line.

The types of line lengths are as follows:

* One foot: **Monometer**
* Two feet: **Dimeter**
* Three feet: **Trimeter**
* Four feet: **Tetrameter**
* Five feet: **Pentameter**
* Six feet: **Hexameter**
* Seven feet: **Heptameter**
* Eight feet: **Octameter**

Rarely is a line of a poem longer than eight feet seen in English language poetry (the poet C.K. Williams is an exception).

Line length and poetic feet are most easily seen in more formal verse. The example above from D.G. Rossetti is pretty obviously iambic pentameter. And Rossetti uses an **accentual-syllabic** meter to flesh out his poem with quite a bit of success. What most free verse poets find more useful than this strict form is accentual meter, where the accents only are counted in the line (although when scanned, the syllables are still marked off...it is just that their number is not of as much import.)

Take this free-verse example from James Merrill:



Image Caption: Free-verse James Merrill Poem

Things to note about this poem:

There is no any "set" meter in this poem, but the meter clearly plays a key role in its effectiveness. In particular it is worth noting the line that stands alone (line 7). Notice that Merrill moves toward iambic pentameter in line 6 and then sustains it through line 7. Here there is an inversion from the typical set-meter/variation sequence that is found in a lot of more formal poetry. Here the variation comes in the move into set meter, rather than varying from a set meter.

Just like establishing a [visual pattern](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/569/01/) in a poem, establishing a meter creates expectations in your reader. Consequently, as with pattern, to vary that meter is to create emphasis. Some will say that your ear should be the first judge on these matters rather than your eye (looking at the scanned poem). There is probably some truth to this. Many poets will tell you that you should always read a poem out loud several times every time you get a draft done. If it doesn't sound good every time, there might be something that isn't working. This is where scanning the poem might come in handy; dissecting the lines and sculpting them until they [sound](http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/570/04/) better.

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**Sound and Rhyme**

**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":

You send me your poems,  
I'll send you mine.  
  
Things tend to awaken   
even through random communication.  
  
Let us suddenly  
proclaim spring. And jeer  
  
at the others,  
all the others.  
  
I will send a picture too  
if you will send me one two.  
  
(Creeley 39)

The last stanza varies from the rest of the poem in that it is a perfect rhyme (the third and fourth lines have a "slant rhyme," and of course the word "others" repeated in lines seven and eight are also perfect rhymes, in a way, being the same word...more on kinds of rhymes in a minute). 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:

*The Candle Indoors*

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 aggrándise, God to glorify.—

Come you indoors, come home; your fading fire  
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 Bartleby.com)

Here the rhyme schemes would be labeled ABBAABBA for the first stanza and CDCDCD 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

A ply  
B lack  
B Jack  
A glorify

C fire  
D vault  
C desire  
D fault  
C liar  
D salt

Hopkins here is using a 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 the structure work for the poem, 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 Merrill poem used to demonstrate free verse 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."

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**Summary:**

A brief exploration of the various aspects of sound that can be utilized when making a poem. The crafting of the aural aspects of a poem is what we may call "ear training." Thus, the crafting of the visual aspects is what we'd call "eye training."

**Other Matters of Sound**

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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. For 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 seems to lack cohesion (the repeated sounds create pattern, thus 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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