

TWO POEMS IN CARLOS A. ANGELES:
AN EXPERIMENT TOWARD A POETICS OF THE
LYRIC POEM¹

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FROM THE ROOFTOP

*From the rooftop now, the inward eye's
Concern, a sudden landscape and the green
Proximity confirm the space's, the sky's
Pleasure, and what could not be seen
Before, could be.*

*But for a time, it is window and door
Must shape the rectangular scene
By the neighbor's face, by the poor
And futile garden, by the focus thin
Upon a bee,*

*Or a bloom that, against the summer heat,
Is dazed by my city's rage and sun,
By the hostile space of a street
Where one by unsuccessful one
The eye must see*

*The human fable rise and swell and fall
And disappear beyond an actual wall.*

THE SUMMER TREES

*The copper sun that scalds the april boughs
Of summer, from the noon's burst cauldron, there,
In concentrates of fury, hardly knows
The pertinence of patience the trees bear,*

*Who, with their metal branches, scour the air
For rumors of impending May to flood
Their throbbing thirst, or, to defy despair
The stirring breeze makes vocable and loud.*

*All summer long the bare trees stand and wait
While roots probe deepest for a hoard of silt
And seepage—till, silver in the sky, the late
Rains pour at last, hard where the treetops tilt.*

¹I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness to Prof. Elder Olson and Prof. R. S. Crane for the critical method and concepts on which this experiment rests. See Elder Olson, "An Outline of Poetic Theory" in *Critics and Criticism*, ed. R. S. Crane (University of Chicago. 1952), pp. 45-82, and also his *Tragedy and*

Principles of Formal Analysis

WHenever a poem happens to be an imitation of a human action or experience,² the general principles of analysis that may be employed in a strictly formal approach are the object, the manner, the means, and the effect or power of the imitation since, collectively, they are capable of discriminating the *kind* of poem that a given lyric is.

In terms, then, of the *object* of imitation, lyric poems³ may differ as they render different *objects*:

1) someone who is simply moved by an emotion, say, a passionate longing ("O Western Wind") or grief (Walter Savage Landor's "Mother, I Cannot Mind My Wheel"); or

2) someone who is engaged in a solitary activity of thought, say, contemplating (Keats' "Ode on a Grecian Urn") or deliberating, making a choice (Frost's "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"); or

3) someone who is committing a verbal act on someone else, say, persuading (Marvell's "To His Coy Mistress") or threatening (Browning's "My Last Duchess"); or

4) two or more people interacting with each other as in "Edward" (where the dialogue between mother and son unfolds the real situation) or in Browning's "The Bishop Orders His Tomb" (where the dying bishop, as he perceives his children's reactions in the course of his plea, revises again and again his last wishes).⁴

the Theory of Drama (Wayne State University, 1961); and R.S. Crane, *The Languages of Criticism and the Structure of Poetry* (University of Toronto, 1953).

²A lyric poem is either *didactic* or *mimetic*. It is didactic when it inculcates a particular moral or idea: Emerson's "Fable," Dickinson's "Much Madness is Divinest Sense," or Blake's "The Sick Rose." It is mimetic when it renders someone's particular action or experience for the sake of its emotional power and the beauty of its representation: Lovelace's "To Lucasta, On Going to the Wars," Hopkins' "Spring and Fall," or Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock." When a poem is didactic, its object (*i.e.*, the poetic "thesis"), manner of exposition, and means of presentation are directed toward our intellectual assent. The capacity to convince or at least provoke us intellectually is its distinctive power. When a poem is mimetic, its object (*i.e.*, the poetic experience), manner, and means of imitation are directed toward our emotional response, based of course upon an intelligent apprehension of the whole experience. The capacity to move us emotionally is its distinctive power. We are *not* saying that no emotion may be involved in a didactic poem or conversely, that no idea may be involved in a mimetic poem; it is a matter of what is really the primary interest in the poem itself. And neither is the distinction between didactic and mimetic poems a question of literary merit.

³The definition of a given *kind* of lyric poem results, precisely, from "the formulation of the distinctive means, object, manner, and effect of the (poetic) synthesis (since it) gives all four of the causes which are collectively, but not singly, peculiar to it." (Olson, "Outline of Poetic Theory," *op. cit.*, p. 558.)

⁴Such a classification of the *poetic object* (or object of imitation) in relation to the lyric poem is found in Olson's "Outline," p. 560. He notes there that "these classifications must not be confused with species; they are not poetic species but lines of differentiation of the object of imitation." The various *poetic objects* admit also of a number of possible variations in terms of their *specific* organizing principle. Wallace Stevens' "Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird," for example, consists of a series of impressions or perceptions somehow unified in terms of the speaker, the object of the various perceptions, etc.

In terms of the *manner* of imitation, lyric poems may differ as they are (1) dramatic, *i.e.*, the speaker acts in his own person, as in all the aforementioned poems; or (2) narrative, *i.e.*, a narrator recounts the poetic experience, as in Edwin Arlington Robinson's "Richard Cory" or T. S. Eliot's "Aunt Helen"; or (3) a mixed mode, as in "Sir Patrick Spens" or "The Wife of Usher's Well."⁵

Again, in terms of the *effect or power* of the imitation, a lyric poem may in general be serious or comic. The distinction is, however, a thorny problem in criticism. Suffice it to say that the peculiar comic effect is "either infectious gaiety or the ridiculous."⁶ Most lyric poetry is perhaps serious since it is somewhat difficult to come upon specimens of the comic lyric poem: "To His Coy Mistress," Herrick's "Upon Julia's Clothes" or "Upon the Nipples of Julia's Breast," and Suckling's "The Constant Lover" (all induce an infectious gaiety); Eliot's "Prufrock" and "Aunt Helen," Robinson's "Miniver Cheevy," and Browning's "Soliloquy of the Spanish Cloister" (all evoke the ridiculous).⁷

Finally, in terms of the *means* of imitation or the *verbal medium* itself, a poem may employ familiar or uncommon words, conventional or unusual imagery and other rhetorical devices, ordinary or uncommon syntax, etc. Compare, for example, Burns' "A Red, Red Rose" or Leigh Hunt's "Jenny Kiss'd Me" with Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning" or T. S. Eliot's "Sunday Morning Service."

But the object, manner, means, and effect or power of the imitation are, as we said, *general* formal principles since they apply equally well to other literary works — plays, novels, short-stories, etc. — which happen to imitate a human action or experience. We must, therefore, seek in the same principles a certain analytical refinement by which poems may further be discriminated *inter se* as to their more specific kinds.

We have already seen how, in terms of the specific *object*, one could formally distinguish "O Western Wind" from "To His Coy Mistress" or Frost's "Stopping By Woods" from Hopkins' "Spring and Fall." For even when the *object* is the same in two given poems (*e.g.*, an activity of thought), there may yet be found a *specific* formal difference in the same structural or organizing principles: thus, the speaker in Frost's

⁵ I can only touch here on an interesting critical problem. "Edward" is a lyric poem because its chief interest lies in the interaction between mother and son. The grim situation that their interaction unfolds has the effect of shock since it changes completely our impression of the encounter which the poem enacts. But in "Sir Patrick Spens" and "The Wife of Usher's Well," the chief interest lies in the *plot* or *story* rather than in any one particular action or event (such as the encounter in "Edward") which the poem renders. Hence, both popular ballads are *narrative poems*, *i.e.*, plot is their organizing principle. I am, of course, distinguishing a lyric poem *in the narrative mode* from a *narrative poem* on the order of Keats' "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and "The Eve of St. Agnes" or Coleridge's "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner."

⁶ Olson, *Tragedy and the Theory of Drama*, p. 164.

⁷ Note that we are not speaking of "the comic spirit" or "the comic vision."

poem is deliberating, making a choice, whereas in Hopkin's poem, he is simply meditating, brooding⁸; in one, the principal part of the *poetic object* is the choice or moral action, but in the other, simply the train of reflection; and obviously, the poetic power is different, for to the one imitation of action, we respond with a kind of noble relief, as over a temptation successfully resisted, but to the other, we respond with a kind of solemn and pensive mood.

Evidently, too, there are various dramatic and narrative devices and techniques by which one may differentiate among poems. A few obvious instances must here suffice. In "Richard Cory," the narrator is a reliable spokesman, but in "Aunt Helen," a sardonic observer. Such a difference significantly qualifies our response to the poetic experience in either poem.⁹ Both poems, too, exemplify one kind of lyric poem in the narrative mode, what I may call the *lyric character sketch* since the delineation of character is the organizing principle. Yet another kind may be called the *scenic lyric* since the description of a scene is the structural principle: Shakespeare's "When Icicles Hang by the Wall" and Jonathan Swift's "A Description of the Morning."

In terms also of the *effect or power* of the imitation, a poem may induce in us an emotion or frame of mind similar to, or different from, that of the lyric speaker. In Landor's "Rose Aylmer" or Hopkins' "Spring and Fall," we tend to share the speaker's grief or pensive mood; but in "O Western Wind," we do not ourselves long for the beloved though we feel a general sort of sympathy, as for any lover in distress. Or, again, the poem may move us with sympathy for the speaker or with antipathy toward him. In "Coy Mistress," we feel friendly toward the lover, we admire him as being clever and witty, and wish him well; but in "Last Duchess," we feel hostile toward the lover, we loathe him as a ruthless egomaniac, and wish him thwarted or punished.

And even in terms of the *means* of imitation, we can, if we like, distinguish between Hunt's "Jenny Kiss'd Me," for example, and Housman's "With Rue My Heart is Laden." Both employ conventional metaphors; but in Hunt, a single metaphor serves, in Housman, several, though both poems are of about the same length. It is a small point, of course, but indicative: in Hunt, a straight and almost literal statement of fact is sufficient to evoke the mood of celebration; but in Housman, the

⁸ *Simply*, I say, because it is not, as in "Ode on a Grecian Urn," for example, a complex process of discovering a new "truth" or insight. The speaker has always known from experience "the blight man was born for," and is only responding, just now, to Margaret's situation. Margaret only confirms his knowledge of "sorrow's springs" and is, therefore, only the occasion for his pensive activity.

⁹ A similar difference between the narrators in "Sir Patrick Spens" and "The Wife of Usher's Well" may also be remarked: in one, the narrator also comments at some length on the tragic action in order to enlist our pity, but in the other, he remains a detached and uninvolved reporter (except for his comment on the hats of "birk"). It is a *formal* difference since it is determinative of the effect or power of the poetic imitation.

poetic statement is a little more elaborate and almost entirely metaphorical in order to induce the rueful mood.

Thus, it all depends *how specific* the critic wishes to be in any formal analysis of a given poem; but the more discriminating one is, the more one is able to appreciate and judge the peculiar excellence of a given poem in terms of determinate criteria relevant to one or another distinctive *kind* of lyric poem.¹⁰

The Reflective Lyric

Most of the lyric poems in Carlos A. Angeles' *a stum of jewels*¹¹ belong to the same general class, *i.e.*, serious lyric poetry in the dramatic mode, imitating a mental action or experience of a single character in a single *closed situation*,¹² through a verbal medium more or less remote from ordinary diction and construction. For the sake of convenience, I shall call this kind of lyric poem a *reflective lyric*.

The principal part of the reflective lyric is the activity of thought or reflection, whatever else is its more specific nature or character as someone's action. But the other parts of the *object* of imitation are, in the order of their importance, the lyric character, his situation, his thought and emotion, and his own idiom or diction. Character, thought and emotion, and sometimes a more or less specific situation,¹³ are the causes of the lyric speaker's activity.

The lyric speaker must be one or another sort of character to act in just such a way and think just such thoughts and feel just such emotions; and sometimes, he must confront a particular situation in order that, given a certain character, he must react exactly as he does. But the lyric character is a potentiality in the sense that only a particular action in the poem actualizes and manifests it to us.¹⁴ There is, for example, no villainous character as such; there must first be a villainous deed or a series of mean and cruel acts before the

¹⁰ Note that what I have presented thus far is a mere sketch of the general critical framework. A fuller discussion will have to be the subject of another essay. My only intention now is to show how a critical study of the *forms* of the lyric poem may be most fruitfully undertaken. The basic assumption is that lyric poems should be appreciated and judged *as poems of certain distinctive kinds* such that criteria relevant to one form or species (*e.g.*, a poem on the order of "O Western Wind") may not necessarily be relevant to another form or species (*e.g.*, a poem on the order of T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock").

¹¹ Manila: Alberto S. Florentino, 1963.

¹² That is: one which does not permit any interruption of the speaker's activity by another character. (Olson, "Outline," p. 560.)

¹³ Strictly speaking, the situation is usually merely the *occasion* of the speaker's action in the poem.

¹⁴ As noted earlier, when a poem is a lyric poem, such action may be an emotional movement or outcry, an activity of thought, a verbal act on someone, or an interaction between characters in a single *closed situation*, *i.e.*, when an interaction is involved, a situation which does not permit any interruption of the activity by other than those originally present.

villainous character is established in the poem, to which you may then respond. You are not moved by character as such; you are moved by it only as a particular action manifests it. Hence, in poetry, action is primary, and character, secondary.¹⁵

By lyric *thought* I mean not the "theme" or central idea of the poem but the speaker's own thoughts in the poem. We must of course distinguish thought from the activity itself of thought or reflection. As mental action or experience of one sort or another, someone's reflection is precisely, as we said, the principal part in the *object* of poetic imitation.

Diction is primarily the vehicle of the speaker's thoughts from which we infer what precisely he is doing, his character, his situation, and his mood or emotion.¹⁶ In the analysis, therefore, of the *words* in the poem, we must keep aware of an important distinction: between their own distinctive character *as thoughts*, whosever they are, or as a train of ideas signified by particular words such that their implications involve only other ideas; and their "dramatic" character *as someone's own activity* of musing, deliberating, etc. so that their implications involve such things as his character, his mood, his situation, etc.

The lyric *emotion* must of course be distinguished from our own emotional reaction to the poetic experience since, obviously, we may feel differently from the lyric speaker. We do not quite *identify* with him since, otherwise, it would be difficult (and sometimes, impossible) to form an opinion upon which to react intelligently.

Our inferences from someone's "speech"¹⁷ concerning his action, character, emotion, and situation lead to particular opinions and judgments¹⁸ which form the basis of our emotional response to the whole

¹⁵ Given the size or magnitude of the action in most lyric poems (*i.e.*, a single character acting in a single closed situation), we do not normally expect a highly individualized character in the lyric speaker. But the degree of individuality may yet vary from poem to poem, *i.e.*, from a more or less universalized character, as in all of Angeles' poems, to a more or less remarkable fullness of identity, like Browning's Duke of Ferrara or Eliot's Prufrock. Of course, neither the Duke nor Prufrock can ever be as complex a character as, say, Hamlet or the Karamazovs, since these are involved in more actions and, consequently, we infer more about their character.

But the character of the lyric speaker is a *formal* element: however universalized his character is in a given poem, it remains an important part in the *object* of imitation, capable of affecting us in some way. If, for example, the lover in "O Western Wind" were less passionate, we should be a little less moved by his outcry of longing; the difference, also, in poetic power between "To His Coy Mistress" and "My Last Duchess" is due chiefly to the character of the lovers which their particular actions manifest.

¹⁶ Diction as the lyric speaker's own peculiar idiom may be a sign of character; *e.g.*, a shallow or conventional mind, a country bumpkin, etc.

¹⁷ Such "speech" is of course only the *apparent form* of the poetic imitation since the real nature or character of the speaker's activity remains to be inferred as an emotional outcry, etc.

¹⁸ We must needs form an opinion concerning the poetic experience as warranted of course by the poetic data. Otherwise, we could not take the poetic experience either lightly or seriously, and we would not be moved by it in any way, since emotion proceeds from an opinion about something or about some-

poetic experience. Our response manifests the inherent power of the poem as an imitation.

*"From The Rooftop" and "The Summer Trees"*¹⁹

"From the Rooftop" and "The Summer Trees," to take two representative poems in Angeles, are essentially the same *kind* of lyric poem. For, in terms of the *object* of imitation, both imitate a mental experience involving a single character in a single closed situation. Again, in terms of the *manner* of imitation, both are dramatic since the lyric speaker acts in his own person. Also, in terms of the means of imitation, both employ diction more or less remote from ordinary words and ordinary construction, and embellished by rhythm and rhyme. And finally, in terms of the *effect or power* of the imitation, both are serious since, in responding to the poetic experience, we do not regard it as trivial, amusing, or ridiculous.

But we may discriminate among variant forms of the reflective lyric for purposes of a more specific formal criticism. We may, for example, discover in the object, the manner, the effect, and even the means of imitation, certain formal differences between "Rooftop" and "Summer Trees." Let us therefore examine these poems more closely in terms of our principles of analysis.

The Object of Imitation: The Lyric Action

In "Rooftop," the experience is one of release from a mental or spiritual oppression. The lyric action therefore consists of two parts: someone makes a sudden discovery which brings about his release from a limiting outlook ("what could not be seen / Before, could be"); and this, in turn, initiates a retrospective brooding on the oppressiveness of a dismal situation from which he has just now escaped. When one considers the speaker's present discovery and sense of freedom, there seems involved in his bitter cry of protest against "my city's rage and sun" a kind of plea for all frustrated lives which cannot share, as he does now, "the space's, the sky's / Pleasure . . . the inward eye's / Concern." He realizes that those lives will remain a "fable" (*i.e.*, "unsuccessful," uneventful, unreal) just so long as, given their particular situation, they are unable to scale, as it were, the imprisoning "actual wall" (*i.e.*, the city as "hostile").

In "Summer Trees," on the other hand, the experience is essentially a joyful recollection, a celebration. The lyric action is from its inception to its end purely an activity of memory. There are no discrete parts: you have one and the same sort of mental action, and it is one straight

one. We cannot feel the emotion of fear unless we have the opinion that something or someone is fearful; a confused emotion is owing to a confused opinion; etc.

¹⁹ Angeles, *a stun of jewels*, pp. 9, 10.

or continuous train of reflection. What you have is a series of perceptions in someone's memory of summer trees by which he ever knows "The pertinence of patience the trees bear." It is a sort of habitual knowledge.

Thus, it can be said that the lyric action in "Rooftop" is relatively complex, but in "Summer Trees," relatively simple. That is: in one, action consists of discrete parts since more things are involved; for example, the speaker's situation has undergone a sudden change and hence, his own frame of mind and emotional condition have changed also.

In considering action as the principal part in the *object* of imitation, we also have to specify, in so far as that is possible, the character of the lyric speaker, his thought,²⁰ emotion, and situation. Only then shall we grasp the whole poetic experience which may be said to be the *soul* or form of the poem in more or less the same sense that Aristotle calls plot the soul of drama.²¹ Then, also, shall we apprehend the unique power of a given poem as an imitation of action or experience.

The Lyric Character

The lyric speaker in any poem by Angeles is a perceptive and morally sensitive observer.²² You do not have, as in Browning or Edwin Arlington Robinson, a complex variety of *dramatis personae*. It is clearly Angeles (or, if you will, the same mind or sensibility) who speaks through the lyric speaker in every poem. But in this, Angeles is like most other lyric poets.

Nevertheless, from poem to poem, we do respond in some way to the character of the lyric speaker. It is an aspect of the whole poetic experience and, therefore, part of its inherent power to move us. And thus, between two poems, it can sometimes happen that certain moral traits or qualities of the lyric speaker will make for a certain formal difference, *i.e.*, a difference in their specific power.²³ It may of course be said that some sort of character is inevitably implied by the

²⁰ The lyric *thought*, as the sole basis of inferences concerning all other parts of the *object* of imitation, is always involved in the analysis of those other parts as well as in the analysis of the manner, the means, and the effect of the poetic imitation.

²¹ In the *Poetics*, Aristotle considers only a particular kind or species of mimetic drama, *i.e.*, tragedy on the order of, say, "Oedipus the King" or "Hamlet," but not tragedy on the order of, say, "Macbeth" or "Death of a Salesman."

²² Except in "Asylum Piece" (*a stun of jewels*, p. 18), which is a narrative poem, or a kind of lyric anecdote. It is, incidentally, the only instance in Angeles of the mixed mode in the manner of imitation, and the only instance of the comic lyric poem.

²³ In "The Invalid" (*a stun of jewels*, p. 11), for example, a certain habitual disposition of soul betrays an apparent moral deficiency of a sort in the lyric actor. Such a difference in character—quite apart from the specific nature of his action—establishes a formal difference between this poem and "Rooftop" or "Summer Trees." Generally speaking, one tends toward a kind of moral disapproval of the invalid, since one judges unfavorably of his disposition, and toward a kind of moral approbation for the speaker in "Rooftop" or "Summer Trees."

specific nature of the action in a given poem. True: but what I want to stress is that character, as a *cause* of the lyric action, is an aspect of the organizing principle in any poem which happens to be an imitation. The lyric action in such a poem always *requires* a given sort of character to carry it through and make it seem probable or necessary.

In "Rooftop", then, and "Summer Trees," the moral sensitivity and perceptiveness of the lyric speaker is more or less of the same cast. Again, it may be said that the similarity arises simply from the object of the speaker's reflection: but this cannot be true. In one or the other poem, the sort of lyric action that you do have requires just that sort of moral sensitivity to render it probable or necessary. In "Rooftop," for example, someone does protest against "the poor / And futile garden" or lament "the focus thin / Upon a bee"; he is made unhappy by "a bloom that, against the summer heat, / Is dazed by my city's rage and sun"; he feels a compassion for "the human fable... (that) one by unsuccessful one (must) rise and swell and fall / And disappear beyond an actual wall." And of course, the speaker's "pleasure" is also a kind of moral triumph since his "inward eye's concern" is essentially a moral one, *i.e.*, a concern for breadth of vision or perspective by which a certain freedom is secured and a richer or fuller life is made possible.

There is, too, in "Summer Trees," a similar moral sensitivity. The lyric speaker "knows / The pertinence of patience," and may also be said to feel a kind of moral triumph when,

silver in the sky, the late
Rains pour at last, hard where the treetops tilt.

As in "Rooftop," therefore, a moral interest may be said to underlie the speaker's perceptions and to be the cause of his pleasure when the trees seem to him to rejoice in the "late rains."

But when we say that the lyric speaker in "Summer Trees" is morally sensitive, we mean primarily that his impressions have a moral tenor: note, for example, "The pertinence of patience the trees bear" under the scalding sun, or their "metal branches" that seem in their sound "to defy despair." It may therefore be said that the moral concern is a more dominant element in "Rooftop" since there the speaker shows, for example, moral indignation and compassion for pent-up lives. The difference is of course a matter of degree, and yet, owing to it, the poetic imitation affects us somewhat differently.

The Lyric Emotion

In considering the lyric action and character, we have of course touched also on the emotion of the lyric speaker and his situation; but

this is unavoidable since, after all, the poem is a certain interrelationship of such elements as action, character, etc. by which a unique and particular experience is constituted. The *object* of imitation is a whole unity to which we respond; its elements are more or less separable only in specific formal analysis.

Generally speaking, in both "Rooftop" and "Summer Trees," the central emotion is a kind of pleasure which we tend to share with the lyric speaker; but in "The Invalid" (to illustrate an obvious difference), a kind of pain, a resentment and uneasiness or perplexity which move us with pity toward the lyric actor.²⁴ More specifically, the speaker in "Rooftop" feels released from a past and dismal situation. Hence, the emotion is a certain buoyancy or exhilaration of spirit that the speaker's sudden discovery or insight brings on:

From the rooftop now, the inward eye's
Concern, a sudden landscape and the green
Proximity confirm the space's, the sky's
Pleasure, and what could not be seen
Before, could be.

And yet, his present mood of joy is also tinged with gloom owing to his own compelling recognition of "the focus thin" and "hostile space" from which he is just now released. The *manner* of imitation enforces not only the sudden emotional change from a past condition but also the exact character of the present mood. For, should one reverse the order of the speaker's thoughts, *e.g.*, reserve the first stanza for the conclusion, the effect would be different: the gloom should be quite dispelled or mitigated, and the joy increased into a kind of exultation.

If "Rooftop" is a kind of affirmation of "the inward eye's concern," "Summer Trees" is a celebration of "the pertinence of patience." The speaker is vividly recollecting certain impressions which, from "copper sun that scalds" to "the late rains," progressively magnify the central insight. And therefore, his thoughts, unlike those of the speaker in "Rooftop," do not have a pensive cast but remain throughout a kind of joyful musing. The sombreness is entirely in the object of reflection ("the noon's burst cauldron," the trees' "throbbing thirst," etc.): the activity of recollection itself is one of celebration. Indeed, the speaker's thought and emotion even reach a kind of climax as he imaginatively shares in the trees' rejoicing when, released from summer oppression, they receive their patience's meed. There is no sudden discovery, no looking back from a changed perspective, no qualification of a present

²⁴ We speak of a "lyric actor" because "The Invalid" (like "Bearded Lady," a *stun of jewels*, p. 21) is a reflective lyric in the narrative mode; *i.e.*, you are told about someone, though the narrator, in both poems, enters fully into the lyric actor's consciousness.

emotion or mood owing to any change in the speaker's situation. The speaker is only and simply recollecting and celebrating "The Summer Trees."²⁵

The Manner of Imitation

Both "Rooftop" and "Summer Trees" are essentially dramatic. But each poem affects us differently, and part of the reason lies in the precise manner of imitation.

In "Rooftop," the manner has to do chiefly with the ordering of the parts of the lyric action itself and with the arrangement of the speaker's thoughts or perceptions. First, then, as regards the lyric action, you begin with the speaker's sudden discovery of a new perspective which, though a mental event, is momentous since the speaker feels a certain exhilaration of spirit. You grasp the event and share the speaker's mood. But, next, you have the speaker's retrospection, an activity of thought initiated by his discovery; he looks back and considers what it was "before . . . for a time." And you realize, only then, that the speaker feels released just now from an oppressive outlook; you move from the present situation and mood of the speaker to his dismal past. Consequently, you feel at the end of the poem a certain admixture of gloom. The poem itself ends with the speaker's pensive consideration of "the human fable." As noted earlier, to reverse the order of the lyric action would change the peculiar effect or power of the poetic imitation.

The speaker's thoughts, on the other hand, are arranged in climactic and logical order: from the present view to a past "scene," and from each particular scene to its effect. Thus, you move from "a sudden landscape and the green proximity" to "the rectangular scene . . . the poor and futile garden . . . the hostile space of a street"; and from "the space's, the sky's pleasure" to the poverty and oppressiveness of the old "scene" and the futility of life under its narrow and limiting sponsorship. In the speaker's retrospection, particular stress is laid, from one object of perception to another, on the frustrating character of the "scene" as "the focus thin"; in fact, from "the rectangular scene" to "the human fable," there is a progression of oppressiveness. Logical order might also be seen in terms of the speaker's coign of vantage: he sees "from the rooftop now . . . a sudden landscape," but from "window and door" in the past, only "the poor and futile garden." Also, he

²⁵ He is not actually "there," watching "all summer long" and making his observations till "the late rains pour at last." This is patently absurd. It is only as though he were actually "there," as a witness, his memory being so vivid and perceptive that he could, for example, imaginatively feel, even now, "the noon's burst cauldron," or see what "roots probe deepest for," or even know the trees' motive, "to defy despair."

shifts and adjusts his focus from larger to smaller "scene," and vice-versa: from garden to bee or bloom, and from "my city's rage and sun" to "the hostile space of a street." The effect of such shifts and adjustments is to make us see more vividly the objects of the speaker's perceptions since a greater effort on our part is required than if the particular objects were observed from a constant standpoint; and seeing more vividly what the speaker himself sees and judges reinforces the total effect of the poetic imitation.

In "Summer Trees," the manner has to do chiefly with the ordering of the speaker's impressions. You do not begin, as in "Rooftop," from a high point, so to speak, of the lyric action (such as a sudden discovery and release from oppression). What you have is something like a straight series of impressions in someone's recollection of trees in torrid summer. The speaker, who is only recalling a "scene," does shift his standpoint but the object of perception ("The Summer Trees") remains constant. Such concentration has the effect of intensifying our own impressions of the "scene" (as of "concentrates of fury" in "copper sun" and "metal branches") toward the fullest apprehension of "the pertinence of patience the trees bear."²⁶

The speaker's impressions are recalled in logical and climactic order: first, the occasion for the trees' "patience" in the punishing heat of summer; next, the defiant endurance of their "patience"; and finally, its fit requital in "the late rains." Or, you first have the hardship "under the noon's burst cauldron," the persevering toil for moisture, the long waiting—and then, the sudden succor when "the late rains pour at last." Or, again, you have first a statement of the speaker's central insight, "The pertinence of patience the trees bear"; and the rest of the poem demonstrates it in a kind of "dramatization" of the scene (trees versus sun, and then, the liberating rain).²⁷ Surely, then, however one views the order, it does serve to heighten the power of the poetic imitation, *i.e.*, its capacity to make us rejoice with the speaker as he recalls his knowledge of summer trees.²⁸

²⁶ Compare, again, with the various objects of perception and the marked shifts in standpoint and focus that they required in "Rooftop." The effect there is to deepen our sense of the speaker's moral agitation in the past.

²⁷ The speaker's thoughts in "Summer Trees" may thus be said to partake of the character of an *argument*. It constitutes a formal difference between this poem and "Rooftop" (where the speaker's thoughts may be said to be a kind of brooding)—a difference that pertains, of course, to the *object* of imitation.

²⁸ Note also that, at the outset of the poem, you are looking up with the speaker at "the copper sun"; next, you regard the trees' "metal branches," and then probe underneath where "roots probe deepest for a hoard of silt and seepage." And at the end of the poem, you are looking up again, but this time you see, not "the copper sun," but the "silver . . . rains"; not the "noon's burst cauldron. . . . In concentrates of fury," but the rains that "pour at last, hard." Where before you saw the "metal branches scour the air," now you see "the treetops tilt" as though fulfilled. Summer's trying regimen has ended in the joyful triumph of the trees' "patience."

Thus, the *manner* of imitation, considered as a cause of the poetic power inherent in each poem, constitutes a formal difference between "Rooftop" and "Summer Trees"; *i.e.*, the manner in each poem is directed toward a peculiar effect of the poem as an imitation of a mental experience. In one, the specific manner of imitation helps to qualify the effect of joy with a certain degree of gloom or pensiveness; in the other, it helps to intensify the mood of celebration.

*The Means of Imitation*²⁹

The words in "Rooftop" are governed by two contrasting experiences of the speaker: the present satisfies, the past frustrates, his "inward eye's concern." The contrast is chiefly indicated by his particular coign of vantage: in one experience, "the rooftop," in the other, "window and door." The balance in the contrast is tilted toward his recollected past, and the effect is to make us perceive that the speaker's mood is yet alloyed with a certain oppressive gloom; he cannot yet enter fully into "the space's, the sky's pleasure." And thus, after the first stanza, the words serve to make the speaker's past loom into prominence and cast a pall over the moment's sudden triumph. The "landscape and the green proximity (which) confirm the space's, the sky's pleasure" and fulfill his "inward eye's concern" are heavily counterbalanced by the rest of the poem — "the rectangular scene by the neighbor's face," "the poor and futile garden," "the focus thin upon a bee," etc. In contrast to his inward eye's "pleasure," all these recollections have, even now in his present mood, precisely that effect on the speaker on which the poem ends: "The eye must see"

The human fable rise and swell and fall
And disappear beyond an actual wall.

Take, for instance, the word "concern" or "proximity." The word is meant to suggest all that is relevant to the speaker's experience,

²⁹ I only wish here to indicate the direction that an analysis of the specific means of imitation must take whereby we may apprehend any formal difference between "Rooftop" and "Summer Trees." We must note, however, that from another point of view, the words in the poem are its most important part since they are the vehicle of someone's thoughts; one must apprehend these thoughts before one can apprehend anything of the poem at all. But someone's thoughts are not the *whole* poem; they imply, as we said earlier, those other things which are non-verbal but which constitute the whole experience of which the poem is an imitation. And no exact paraphrase, if that were possible, will do as well as the poem itself, not only because each word has somehow its own integrity but also because, in a given poem, it is just this word or that word, and no other, which can more precisely or more forcefully render the speaker's thoughts, or invest him with a particular character, or define his action or situation, or limn his mood or emotion. All these elements of the poetic experience determine and control the words in the poem; the complexity of such governance is indeed owing to the complexity of the experience which the poet, in employing particular words or devices, seeks to render.

nothing more and nothing less. Of course, we would not know what is relevant unless we have first grasped that experience. "The inward eye" is a metaphor for the mind or the imagination or, if you will, the spirit—not as an abstract entity, but the speaker's own faculty or spirit. Considering his experience, then, "concern" implies on his part an anxious moral care and even preoccupation with breadth of vision. When he says, "it is window and door / Must shape the rectangular scene," he is saying that "for a time" there was no choice at all, and his spirit felt cramped and deprived. Note the full force of "rectangular scene." It derives not only from its juxtaposition with "the neighbor's face" (which has the painful effect of somehow demeaning the human or spiritual element in the "scene"), nor its connexion with such other words as "landscape" (in the sense of almost unlimited vista) and "wall" (which denotes a certain rectangularity). The full force of the description chiefly derives from its "dramatic" context, *i.e.*, the experience of the speaker who feels released on "the rooftop now." The old "scene," to his "inward eye," is not only flat and uninteresting³⁰ since it confirms no pleasure in his particular "concern"; it is also oppressive, as though his mind or spirit were mured in a rectangle, or he himself were hemmed by "an actual wall." And similarly, when he says, "The eye must see / The human fable rise and swell and fall," he is lamenting that "before" he was constrained to see the pitiful effect of that "hostile space" which gave his "inward eye" no pleasure; and so his words imply, as we said, a protestation and a plea.

"Proximity," like "concern," is also governed by the poetic experience; we can claim that it is just the right word only in terms of the peculiar experience it bears on. "The green proximity" seems rather formal or stiff, for it really means the closeness of trees to the speaker or, at least, a clear prospect of greenery "from the rooftop now." But since it is a "sudden" view of "landscape" and the speaker "for a time" has had only "the rectangular scene," their closeness just now seems to him to have an alien or unfamiliar character; and that precisely is what the formality of the expression suggests in the speaker's own experience. As we said earlier, the speaker is not quite ready as yet to enter fully into "the space's, the sky's pleasure." This is why he can only say that the green vista "confirms" *their* "pleasure."

Similarly, the words in "Summer Trees" serve to convey not only the speaker's insight but also his celebration of "the pertinence of patience the trees bear." The first stanza is governed by a vivid recollection of "the copper sun", but the recollection celebrates the speaker's central perception in the poem. Hence, the words must not only stress the intense heat (in such metaphors as "copper" and "metal") but also

³⁰ "Scene" (as opposed to "landscape") adds to the speaker's sense of its dullness and spiritual aridity as he recollects it.

underscore the jubilant mood. This, in fact, is the peculiar effect of the ironic understatement in "The copper sun . . . hardly knows." The same effect is heightened in the second stanza which (even syntactically) flows directly from the central perception and demonstrates it, since there the speaker's thoughts bear directly on the persevering and defiant effort of trees against summer. The first and second stanzas contrast two sets of perceptions: "the copper sun that scalds the april boughs" and the trees' "metal branches (that) scour the air (or) defy despair." The contrast not only accentuates the insight into the trees' "patience" by giving it body, as it were, but it also dramatizes the mood of celebration. Someone is not only recollecting sun versus trees: even as he seems to feel again "the noon's burst cauldron, there," so also he seems, even now, to participate in the trees' enduring toil against summer.

There is a sort of pause in the third stanza as the speaker recapitulates:

All summer long the bare trees stand and wait
While roots probe deepest for a hoard of silt
And seepage —

Note that the pause, the recapitulation, is an aspect of the lyric action which the words are made to convey. But more than that, the words magnify the celebration. "All summer long" intensifies the speaker's impression of the punishing heat; and "the *late* rains (which) pour *at last*" underscore it further. The words ("All summer long") recapitulate the first stanza. But the speaker is also saying, "the bare trees stand and wait," etc. These words, recapitulating the second stanza, are ordered toward the speaker's final declaration of a deeply-felt admiration (or even reverence). "Bare" recalls the sun that "scalds the april boughs" and converts them into "metal branches"; but the roots that probe deep for moisture evoke those boughs that

scour the air
For rumors of impending May to flood
Their throbbing thirst.

And finally, the advent of rain brings the celebration to its highest point:

till, silver in the sky, the late
Rains pour at last, hard where the treetops tilt.

Note that "silver" (as opposed to "copper sun" or "metal branches") at once sounds the triumphant note; that the rains "pour hard" even as the sun before poured "from the noon's burst cauldron . . . In concentrates of fury"; and that "the treetops tilt," rejoicing, even as before "their metal branches" could only sound in "the stirring breeze . . . to defy despair."³¹

³¹ Incidentally, the striking shift in subject (since it is the breeze which "makes (the trees) vocable and loud") reinforces the speaker's impression of the breeze as an ally: it brings "rumors of impending May."

If, then, there is any formal difference between "Rooftop" and "Summer Trees" in terms of the specific *means* of imitation, the difference is attributable to the particular ends for which the words are employed.³² Generally speaking, "Rooftop" is more literal, and "Summer Trees," more metaphorical. A greater degree of literalness is effective in "Rooftop" toward a direct and unequivocal delineation of a past and oppressive situation of the speaker. The figurative statements (as in "a bloom . . . dazed by my city's rage") are quite simple in the sense that they do not really require any subtle interpretation; they translate more or less immediately into their literal purport. In comparison with the richly metaphorical language in "Summer Trees," they are intended primarily to assert a comparison, to describe a situation, at a certain level or depth of the sensibility. Neither poem is of course *symbolic* in the sense that Blake's "The Sick Rose" is a symbolic lyric poem³³; nor *ironic* in the sense of an "ironic" awareness in either poem of an opposite and complementary outlook or attitude.³⁴

³² We must note here that words may be deemed "dramatic" in another sense, *i.e.*, when, considered as signs, they present whatever they signify so vividly or so cogently that we are struck by the expression and regard it as memorable. It is in this sense that metaphor, irony, etc. have been considered as essentially "poetic" devices, or even as principles of poetic structure, when in fact they are fundamentally rhetorical devices which may or may not be necessary in a given poem. It is perhaps true that they have more currency in poems; and yet the fact remains that they are controlled by everything else in the poem itself. If there is ironic contrast, for example, between "rooftop" and "window and door," or between "human fable" and "actual wall," it cannot follow that, therefore, irony is the organizing principle of the poem itself (unless, of course, one considers the poem merely as a verbal composite). The irony is determined and controlled by the experience which the poem renders; and, certainly, the *verbal* irony is the least of it since the ironic effect results chiefly from our perception of the whole experience itself. For—to repeat—we are not chiefly responding to a linguistic structure (the poem as a verbal composition), but rather, to someone's experience (the poem as imitation).

³³ I quote the poem herewith:

O Rose, thou art sick!
 The invisible worm
 That flies in the night,
 In the howling storm
 Has found out thy bed
 Of crimson joy,
 And his dark secret love
 Does thy life destroy

The poem compels us to interpret it symbolically because it insists on a further range of significance than the mere spectacle of a rose attacked by a worm on a stormy night. In "Rooftop" or "Summer Trees," however, there is no compelling necessity to scour the air, as it were, for rumors of a hidden or more profound meaning than the speaker's experience as rendered.

³⁴ Again, there is clearly no need to unravel an "ironic" tension between an implied attitude and an obvious or literally expressed evaluation. The speaker's attitude in either poem is unequivocally rendered.

The Power or Effect of the Imitation

At this stage in our analysis, we need only recapitulate formal differences in terms of poetic effect.³⁵ Both "Rooftop" and "Summer Trees" put us in a frame of mind more or less similar to that of the lyric speaker. This happens naturally, so to speak, since we are made to reflect on the same object that the speaker muses on in more or less the same manner that he does; and we are not given any ground for disagreement with his thoughts or disapproval of his action or character. In "Rooftop," the experience is one of sudden release from a mental or spiritual oppression, and hence, we feel a certain exhilaration or buoyancy of spirit with the speaker. But the greater part of the poetic experience consists of a brooding on a dismal and oppressive "scene" which reduces life into "the human fable," and hence, our exhilaration is depressed somewhat by a certain gloom. In "Summer Trees," on the other hand, the experience is essentially a joyful recollection, a celebration; and we share the speaker's jubilant mood, accepting without question "The pertinence of patience the trees bear" against summer. Such a difference in poetic power between the two poems is indicative of each their peculiar nature or kind as a reflective lyric.

Conclusion

Only a specific formal analysis of lyric poems can distinguish their various forms or distinctive kinds for purposes of evaluating their excellence as products of the poetic art in terms of their own peculiar standards or criteria. While such analysis is necessarily laborious and cannot give comfort or inspiration through grand insights into the nature of poetry or literature as a whole, it alone can judge individual poems according to their own nature as poetic wholes of a given kind.

We have discriminated at least two distinctive forms of the reflective lyric by specifying the object, the manner, the means, and the effect or power of the poetic imitation in each case. There may be other forms, but we cannot say what these are before we have specified their structures.

³⁵ I am unhappily aware that in what may be called "atomic analysis," the elements assume, after a time, a character of unrelieved monotony against which the mind rebels. There is perhaps a point in criticism at which the mind rests content with a kind of "negative capability." Any irritable reaching after fact or explanation ceases, and "the immovable critic," as Marianne Moore puts it, no longer "twitches his skin like a horse that feels a flea."