

Towards Housman, the Context for Emotion

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Nymphs and shepherds, dance no more

— John Milton —

I

“Emotion is fit only for women, for men, it must strike fire from his spirit!”¹⁾ was not said of poetry, but of music by the composer of the Symphony *Choral* a hundred years preceding the awakening of modern poetry. The half-awakened anti-romantist T. E. Hulme was to salvage the poetry that had gone thoroughly mawkish and soggy from the ultimate ‘annihilation of poetry’ in the deluge of inflated emotions.

Though not ultimately defined or explicated, emotion as such has been acknowledged a dimension of human existence. If the fact that Homo Sapience is intellectual does not preclude his emotional self, emotion and intellect are not each other antonyms. As a matter of fact, the issues of modern poetics have been always concerned with the emotion involved in creation, reception and in criticism.

Emotion could be considered as the term to specify the somewhat controllable subjective attitude a mental organism assumes, upon the spontaneous reaction in its regard to the cause as something beyond its command. It is, at its base, an intellectual attitude of the subject compelled to select and assume under the condition either external or internal. It is conscious, private and could be either active or passive in its disposition, and, in its quality, either highly intellectual or less intellectual.

In contrast to the will power of mental organism, human emotion appears to be regressive—it tends to slip back to the lower, therefore, more indiscriminate, i. e., uniform and universal; when emotion amplifies itself, it steps down towards more typical and communal, thus less individual and defined.

1) as quoted by Sessions, R., via Brentano, B., in *The Composer and his Message*, p. 49, *The Creative Process*, ed. by Brester, G., Mentor Book, orig. Univ. of Calif.

Thus emotion, if basic and intense enough, incurs the proper symptoms, either conscious or unconscious, which become the indications through which the emotional state of the individual is to be “communicated before it is understood.”

With the evolution of the individuality, the uniqueness becomes established and defined, its proper emotional contents further specific, personal and less communal, thus less communicable. The variety of the elemental feelings and emotional commotions, though vague and non-articulate, are contagious and normative, while specialized exact feeling, the life-content of individuals, becomes less communicable. For the basic emotions, man still retains many an instinctive way of expression and perception; some genres of arts—music, dance, painting, etc.—are accomplished in this order of affairs, whereas the definite emotions defined by particular qualifications become unique, for which man had to invent a convention of expression and comprehension. The language, both referential and evocative in its origin, is adopted for this purpose, still inclined towards a purely intellectual tool-substitute. Whereas, language as such, does not directly express or convey the original emotion of a subject, it none the less enables the subject to articulate its finer emotions in terms of the linguistic norms, the language producing the comparable emotion in an inverse process. This mutual causality multiplies the complexity of this human experience, i. e., the emotion.

We must not forget, however, that emotion is final to individuals, and that without the underlying intellect, the subject will not even feel obliged or urged to objectify its emotional state. The recourse to language always presupposes a presence of intellect, and the emotional involvement, either as the objective or as a side-effect, is essentially accidental and optional.

He could have been very ironical, or perhaps sincere, therefore, when A. E. Housman, in his apologic *The Name and Nature of Poetry* declared that “meaning is of the intellect, poetry is not.” He could have perhaps said “For poetry, among other literary arts whose medium is language, an intellectual convention, the meaning, i. e., the intellectual content carried by the linguistic property of poems, is not the ultimate purpose. It is perhaps the emotional reaction that is the very objective.”

“It is emotion that counts” is a testament by a later critic, R. P. Blackmur; it could

2) Cambridge Univ. Press, 1933, 1948. Unannotated quotations from Housman elsewhere are from this source.

have been what Housman himself might well have said as he further stated that “the intellect is not the fount of poetry, that it may actually hinder its production; and that it cannot even be trusted to recognize poetry when produced...” Is he actually advocating anti-intellectualism? Does he claim that feeble intelligence could produce better poems? Is he promoting poetry as a verbal dissipation of emotion in an uninhibited automatism? Not exactly. Commenting on his idolized Blake and one of his stanzas, Housman says “The feeling with which those lines are read is composite, for one constituent is supplied by the depth and penetrating truth of the thought.” The “truth of thought”, as the main stay of “noble emotion”—the “Nymphs and shepherds, dance no more” so to speak—is nothing but an intellectual property. It is, however, the noble emotion so attained that does count, not the intellectual formula depended upon.

By exalting the “loveliest poetry” of Shakespeare and of Blake (and perhaps of himself) for their “saying nothing” and “being nonsense” yet themselves “being ravishing poetry”, he upholds the cause for the “pure and self-existing poetry” even at the expense of meaning which is “a poor foolish disappointing thing in comparison with the verses themselves.” The obvious paradox is here that poetry consists none but in language and yet something more than language performs is thereby accomplished. Housman was apparently impatient of the means becoming the purpose, the intellect at language level eclipsing the genius of the poetry, thus he joins Collins, Cooper, in their “insurgent against the centralized tyranny of the intellect.”

To the modernist Eliot, the meaning was the ‘meat’ seasoned with a definite flavor, the precise emotion, and poetry was something that is accomplished thereby in stealth. It appears, he says, “to be inevitable, when we recognize that poetry, however intellectual, has to do with the expression of feeling and emotion” as if he wished poetry to be free from such an unaccountable entity. The anti-emotionalist Eliot is just as paradoxical in this way as the anti-intellectualist Housman is; the voice saying “poetry is not turning loose of emotion, but is an escape from emotion” and “from personality” ringing in our ears... Eliot further states “that feeling and emotion are experience in the language of daily life; and that feeling and emotion are particular, while thought is general.”³⁾ Let us first acknowledge that whatever the language, it is ever coefficient

3) Eliot, T. S., from *Le Rôle Social des Poètes*, an address in Paris, May, 1945.

with thought. Assuredly, emotion is particular in the sense that it is the status quo of each individual at a moment of awareness in his life; it will be more communicable when it is further basic and less articulate, because of the original homogeneity of Man, the communal ego. Thought is general in the sense that it is the articulated experience cast in the norms mentally conventionalized, by virtue of language, and is more communicable when it is highly wrought, i. e., further intellectually ordered.

In either of the cases, we must not forget that by the term 'to communicate' we do not mean an emotion, like heat, is being conducted from the origin to the destination. It is not a transfer. Analogy will go better with the resonance of two detached bodies, somewhat similar in the make, across the medium responsive but foreign to the bodies concerned. The vibration of the first body will cause the medium to form wave motions after its own characteristics. When the wave is caught by the second body, a somewhat similar vibration to the original may be provoked with an extra-efficiency. The two bodies need not be identical for resonance, provided some property is common between them.

Emotion itself may or may not be intellectual, but to objectify it with the view of influencing another in some desired way through an abstract convention is thoroughly an intellectual maneuver. The spontaneity in this process is not of animal inevitability, but a subconscious acquirement through accumulated practice or the conscious skill applied well.

Poetry uses language for its medium while music basically the sounds, and both intend to cause the emotional resonance, rather than direct the audience towards pragmatic actions, imaginary or actual, with proper sensations and emotions. In poetry, the emotion is not only attached to the life-content, the experience, but also is attached to the secondary experience, i. e., the feel in the language itself. The 'usual' emotion, for instance, is attached to the usual experiences and circumstances of all kinds, plus those attached to the usual language of our daily use. Language is related in these two ways with our experience, emotion, and with poetry, in one as their medium, in the other as its equivalent of the content, both essentially concerned with the emotional resonances.

To quote Blackmur again, he further defines poetry in terms of emotion, the variable, and order, the constant, thus: "Poetry is more than usual emotion *and* more than usual order, and this double condition is the very condition of the language of

poetry⁴⁾, implying perhaps that the language, the function, is there as something more than the usual language of daily life (*cf.* Eliot above). Thus the “loveliest poetry in saying nothing” as glorified by Housman speaks in a language that transcends the usual language and order...unusualness being ‘not saying anything in the usual use of language.’

With Eliot, we admit that it requires as great intellectual power to express precise emotion as it does to express precise thought, and when accomplished, poetry becomes a “more *precise* medium for emotion than prose” and perhaps less direct than music. This is supported by Blackmur saying “the poetry is the concrete — as concrete as the poet makes it — presentation of experience as emotion. If it is successful, it is self-evident.”⁵⁾ Eliot-Blackmur formula is thus: poetry is “to convey an emotional equivalent for the ideas” or to make the reader *feel*, for instance, Dante’s cosmogony as a matter of personal experience. ‘The definite emotion behind’ the core of the meaning (ideas and thoughts), the ‘exact curve’ of the things, the ‘emotion of the joining of words’ are each hypothesis to explain the ‘impossible union’, ‘the incarnation’, that which takes place without apparent difficulty, though there is a world of difference in their completeness and intensity, wherever a poem takes place with any emotional impact in whatever way and no matter what the explanation. Such is the land we inherited.

It is hence that “what every poet starts from is his own emotion⁶⁾” but retaining, “when it is successful, only what is manifest, the emotion that can be made actual in a form of words that need only to be understood, not argued,”⁷⁾ which obviously is a better policy. One must be selective these days knowing what can be communicated with the least of effort and friction but with an immediate, almost a spontaneous effect.

At this juncture, the Romantic “spontaneous overflow of powerful feeling⁸⁾” derived from emotion recollected in tranquility, akin to the emotion touched off by the subject of contemplation, though not much alien from Plato’s concept of poetry, seems guilty only of one vice, namely ‘the spontaneity’ of the process.

4) Blackmur, R. P., *Language as Gesture*, p. 206, George Allen & Unwin Ltd. London, 1954, orig. 1940.

5) *ibid.*, p. 180.

6) Eliot, T. S., *Poetry and Philosophy*, 1927.

7) Blackmur, R. P., *op. cit.*, p. 100.

8) Wordsworth, W., from Preface to *Second Edition of Lyrical Ballads*.

II

I'd rather learn from one bird how to sing
 than teach ten thousand stars how not to dance

— E. E. Cummings —

The spontaneity to Wordsworth and perhaps to Plato et al including Housman himself, was to surrender oneself to the “unaccountable emotion” as it flows into the poet’s mind, and to have it said as if the emotion was originally “in the way of saying it.” The process seems to take place in the no-man’s land between the psychic causes and results mutually interfering, and we are only told that if a congerly of words presented is genuine, i. e., sincere, and spontaneous, we know it by “a shiver down the spine.” We, like Housman’s terrier, either know it or just don’t. His essential romanticism in poetry is in this accepted mysticism in its process of creation as well as in its reception, though never in “the thing said” — the objective correlative — or in the “way of saying it”—*décor*.

Romantist temperament thinks that unreserved obedience to the so-called ‘inspiration’ is in itself sincere not only as an individual behavior but also as an artistic public performance, and accordingly one such presumes that the reception of the aesthetic stimuli from a piece of work should be no less ‘uncontaminated by intellectualism’. Thus one makes very little difference in his way of accepting inspiration from Nature and that from a piece of art. If spontaneity is considered the sign of genuine motive for a moral act in life, should it be given an aesthetic value if it is evident in the process of creation, reception or of criticism of art?

The sincerity of emotion and the spontaneity of expression as a pair of value-measures are not of the product or of the effect, but of the process of creation and of the creator. It is a condition that led up to the final product and the private experience and its history on the part of the creator beyond the authentic jurisdiction of a reader. Sincere or spontaneous, the poet’s process might have been, yet it has nothing to do with the reader, unless such is made the composite elements of the product, the poem. When such internal features or a poem are being considered, the rumours about its genesis are an additive lore of information extraneous to the very poem and its reading.

The unconditional reception on the part of the reader is, of course, something prior

to the criticism of art. In every reading of a poem, or whatever the piece of literature, Coleridgean ‘willing suspension of disbelief’ is the primary convention and concession, mostly taken for granted too generously even to a detriment.

It has not been unknown that “Les nonchalances sont ses plus grands artifices”¹⁾ and it is simply unfortunate that “What the Elizabethans achieved by intuition and spontaneous imitation, the moderns struggle to attain with the additional aid of theory,” says H. W. Wells; “the psychological doctrine of the intuitions contributes to a theory of the pure lyrics as an art uncontaminated by intellectualism”²⁾ — not, incidentally, by ‘intellect’, however—. Should Hulme be held responsible for the plight of modern poetry when he defined it, decades ago, as “a compromise for a language of intuition which would hand over sensation bodily”³⁾?

While thus the Romantic “spontaneity” was ambiguous, the consciously intellectual aesthetics of the moderns distinguishes that which belongs to the creative phase and to the receptive phase of artistic phenomena called poetry. If what is spontaneously composed fails to effect a spontaneous, or immediate impact, art is compelled to be consciously applied, through experiments and calculations, in the process of its making. We have thrown away all presumptions to begin something new, which however does not promise itself to be better than what has been there. “There is a suppressed conditional clause implicit in all poetry. If things were such and such then... and so the response develops,”⁴⁾ lays out I. A. Richards, the psychologist, and still further, “the amplitude and fineness of response, its sanction and authority” depends upon our awareness of that aesthetic premise, intellectual and even optional, though usually assured. “Belief or imaginative assent is no more difficult...It is the emotion that counts”⁵⁾ confirms Blackmur ...‘the emotion’ that which is final to individuals concerned, the state in which one *is* as the consequence of the experiencing of the poems read. The term ‘spontaneous’ ought to have meant here the proximity between one’s emotion and its cause or its results. Whether mystically conceived and created or artistically fabricated, we get our unmistakable “shiver

1) R gnier, Mathurin.

2) Wells, H. W., *New Poets from Old*, p. 232, Columbia Univ. Press, 1940.

3) Hulme, T. E., *Romanticism and Classicism*, orig. 1913, pub. 1924.

4) Richards, I. A., *Principles of Literary Criticism*, p. 276, Routledge & Kegan Paul, ed. 1955, orig. 1924.

5) Blackmur, R. P., *op. cit.*, p. 101.

down the spine” if the thing is the stuff. As the reader that can duly ‘appreciate poetry’ as defined by Eliot, one is a legitimate reader of any poem as long as he is concerned with that concrete feel of the thing. As a critic, perhaps one may start from his emotion, as it was the way with the poet, through the textual evidences back to the poem as a whole and determine the relationship between the way the poem is and the positive feeling he has in the pit of his stomach, in the hope that a parallel—though in an order removed from the actual—relationship may exist in the cases of others, for we can fairly well take chance upon the ‘unity of sensibility’ and the ‘collective psyche’ of original Man, the human race.

Whether our anticipation is met or not, we have come to accept poetry somewhat differently “from all such statements of a purely philosophical or theoretical nature, in that it has by intention a controlled content of feeling.”⁶⁾

Thus, when prices quoted and commodities sold, the modern ‘fabricated spontaneity’ with its ‘sincerity’, the assumed nonchalances, seem to be the final truth we can perhaps save from dust. The symptoms of ancestral geniality have been catalogued and imitated when poems are to be concocted, while if one happened to have an intuitive product, by any chance, he monitors it himself against the prefabricated measures for the affected naturalness. It has become the conscious art, no longer a myth, in its creation as well as in its reception. The poetry is weaned, ‘naked and full-grown now.’

Thus the relative position of spontaneity in poetry is redeemed and still valid, but in a changed status. It is no longer that of the genesis of poetry nor the way the reader indulges himself in profusion of imagination and of wild surmise. It is the way of poems in their ‘poem-ness’. The aesthetic sincerity is of the way a poem, for instance, performs or behaves itself as such. The language, regardless of the inherent dilemma of referential and evocative compulsions, is there as a naked language with all its gauze of proper qualities and semantic functions.

The emotion is no longer of the poet, or ourselves, but the way a poem *is*, the personality of a poem, with all its internal properties and structure, from which individuals each form his own private emotion, either incommunicably so precise or contagiously vague as the case may be. R. W. Stallman says “In poetry, life and art can in no way

6) Winters, Y., *In Defense of Reason*, p. 363, Univ. of Denver Press, 1947, orig. 1937.

be made equivalent because the emotion or experience which poetry offers are not the actual emotions or experience which everyday life presents, they are specifically aesthetic emotions⁷⁾, echoing again the something 'more than usual' in poetic realm.

The poet may be responsible for the poem, for without him, the poem simply did not exist, and unless so created by him, there should have been another poem, but it is the reader who is responsible for the reaction he formulates upon the perusal of the poem, if he asserts his intelligence as suited to be a moderner. The product, the poems themselves, are neutral abstract, more like the drawing of a triangle standing for the geometrist's idea of a particular kind of triangle.

Allen Tate, in this regard, says that "the poem is its own knower, neither poet nor reader knowing anything that the poem says apart from the words of the poem"⁸⁾, while Herbert Read declares that "Art always rises superior to its origins. It is an entity of direct appeal; we do not, in the process of appreciation (no process but an immediate insight) unfold the process of creation"⁹⁾. And we can further be safely convinced with Stallman here of the fact that "Aesthetic values are anchored within the poem; it is solely the aesthetic structure, the internal organization of the poem, that gives any poem its value. Its value as a poem does not lie in the relation to the mind of the author..."¹⁰⁾, telling us about the critic's platform, not only about the readers'. As a poet objectifies his life-content in the form of poems, of all other means available, the reader might make his experience of reading the poem objectified, for any purpose at all, through his intellectual faculty; then he is said to be something more than a reader.

Our aesthetic interest, for this essay, is in the receptive phase of poetry, because as Tate has said, "the only real evidence that any critic may bring before his gaze is the finished poem,"¹¹⁾ though not thoroughly without hope that it will somehow inversely explain the creative phase concurrently.

Thus we have somewhat eliminated the too universal term 'to express' or 'the expression' in poetics along with the too diffuse analogy 'to convey' or 'transmit',

7) Stallman, R. W., *The New Critics, Critiques and Essays in Criticism*, p. 498, ed. Stallman, Ronald Press Co., New York, 1949.

8) Tate, A., from Narcissus, *The Creative Process, op. cit.*, p. 136, orig. in *Reason in Madness*, Putman, 1941.

9) Read, H., *The Personality of the Poet, The Nature of Literature*, p. 31, Grove Press.

10) Stallman, R. W., *op. cit.*, p. 498.

11) Tate, A., *op. cit.*, p. 136.

both in connection with the poetic content and its manifestation. (*cf.* the analogy above in resonance of two bodies.) This is done through the demarcation we have set up between the two phases of creative process, the creation and the appreciation, as there is a clear aesthetic discontinuity, in spite of our psychological and human continuation in the poet-poem-reader continuum. Both terms, expression and transmission, good as analogical terms, are not descriptive nor precise.

Through carefully analysing and articulating our own experiences of a poem, or objectifying our own feelings, then by comparing and relating the results with the analytical results of the poems themselves in their terms, we could perhaps formulate a set of relationships existing between them in the manner of causality. Someone else might do a similar type of study and draw another set of relationships. Upon a comparison of the two or more sets of such relationships to each other, we may enumerate the points of correspondence and contrast, not in the actual emotional concrete, but in the formulated relationships, which may be further defined by those constants objectively found inherent in the make of the original poems and other circumstantial evidences obtainable.

“The poem cannot then be an imitation of an unique experience, but it may conceivably be an unique experience in itself¹²⁾” says the intellectualist Yvor Winters. The unique experience, the emotion, here should at least mean the experience as unique within the sequence of the entire experience of each individual, the private context of emotion, whether for the poet or for the reader.

Intellect is of the meaning, the language, while emotion is of poetry, the art in the joining of words... is a Housman-Blackmur combination. The term ‘emotion’ is, for each individual reader, his own mental state of being, unique or general, while for poetry, it is a syntax of the component properties of poems. Emotion, in such a sense, is the basis of poetry as it is with some other non-literary arts, while intellect is the basis of literary arts, the symbolic arts, with various-graded complex products and performances in between.

“Genuine emotion in poetry perhaps does not *exist* at all though it is none the less real for that, because a genuine emotion does not need the warrant of existence; it is the necessary result, in the mind, of a *convention* of feelings; like the notion of divine

12) Winters, Y., *op. cit.*, p. 522.

¹³⁾ grace” observes Blackmur in a strict conformity with Eliot’s “The business of the poet is not to find new emotions, but to use the ordinary ones and, in working them up into poetry, to express feelings which are not in actual emotions at all...” elsewhere again “the *significant* emotion, emotion which has its life in the poem and not in the history of the poet”, the impersonal emotion... all seem to point to the fact that poems, the ‘potential cause of experience’ are ‘individual systems of norms’ for emotion which is regressive, always orientated towards the ‘collective psyche’ of Jung, the basic communicability of generic Man. As it is the art that distinguishes behavior from performance, it is the intellect that distinguishes spontaneity from automatism.

III

But oh, good Lord, the verse you make,
It gives a chap the belly-ache.

— *Shropshire Lad* —

Somehow we have language, and the grammar of it has come to us as a second thought, a useful awareness once come, of course; poetry as a distinct experience and performance, likewise, has been there since the beginning, but it is only recently that we became self-conscious and purposive in the practice either in its creation or in its reception. Poetry has been de-mythologized of its spontaneity, the emotional solidity, the obvious. “The emotion of thought, for poetry, was gone, along with the emotion of religion and the emotion of race—the three sources and the three aims of the great poetry of the past¹⁾” deplores Blackmur, as he may. Moderners, out of spite, disinherited themselves of the Poetry, then redeemed it themselves at the revalidated prices. Hence a modern poet, if he deems the illusion of the concrete emotion to be indispensable to give ‘teeth’ to his art, may fabricate, or even “learn his art of beguiling the public by first beguiling himself²⁾” of his own candidness. Yet he will do well to know that it is also his audience, the public, that is ready to come to his terms, being equally cured of Platonic

13) Blackmur, R. P., *op. cit.*, pp. 331-2.

1) *ibid.*, p. 95.

2) Wells, H. W., *op. cit.*, p. 81.

beatitude, though secretly nostalgic and credulous. The state is relative to each and the function remains constant; the spontaneity of it all remains to be a 'poetic criterion' *mutatis mutandis*.

The 'objective correlative of emotion' as a recognition is enlightening in clearing the organic confusion between "the thing said" and "the way of saying it" though it fails to distinguish the 'aesthetic' emotion from the 'actual' emotion. The reader may or may not ascribe the cause, as virtue, of the 'heightened consciousness' to himself, to the poem, or to the poet or even to the cause that originally drove the poet to sing. Yet the fact remains that the result is commensurable with the reader's capacity for resonance. Either conscious or sub-conscious, it is unmistakably an active participation on the part of the reader that makes the poem take its effect. He is the poem while he reads, if a parody is acceptable. By activating the poem himself, he of that particular while bodies forth himself after the matrix prescribed by the poet.

Aesthetically, as already discussed, poetry is no longer the super-charged way of communication from the poets to the audience, though psychologically men may still see Creator's hand behind the creatures, and practically poets may keep writing poems as open letters to the public. They no longer 'express' something to have it 'conveyed' to someone abroad; the terms remains as a lay, human analogy, not precise or descriptive enough for technical talks.

Whatever the genre of poetry, emotion, "the physical fact", according to Herbert Read, is the "common foundation for poetry" to prevail. Poems provide the context for the emotion, as they did for the creators, so they do for an individual who appreciates them properly and finds pleasure in them. "A poem, to be good, must, in some way, involve the resistance: it must carry something of the context of its own creation; it must come to terms with Mercurio," says R. P. Warren, "This is another way of saying that a good poem involves the participation of the reader; it must, as Coleridge puts it, make the reader into an 'active creative being'.³⁾"

"It is only recent that aesthetics has conceded to accept the execution of art (the performance of the prescribed art) as a unique moment within its jurisdiction", points out a French aesthetist. The execution, or the performance of a prescribed piece of music, for instance, may be comparable to the reading of poems, regardless of an audience. The

3) Warren, R. P., *Pure and Impure Poetry, Crit. and Essays in Crit., op. cit.*, p. 218.

effect of the so-called 'empathy' could be most attainable for one in the status of a 'performer'. Apparently the participation of the reader as the performer is what he is doing actually. It is as natural as it is inevitable. The reader may stay to be a Zuschauer retaining his Zuführung, while he can also be a Mitspieler assuming the function of Einführung.⁴⁾ No doubt "every reading aloud or reciting of a poem is merely a performance of a poem and not the poem itself"⁵⁾ R. Welleck asserts, and neither is the printed music score the music to the performer. What matters here is the fact that the proper emotion, the life-content of the performer, if free from all the extraneous consideration other than music playing, undergone by the performer while 'music lasts' has too long been neglected. At least it is one order closer to the essential poetry than the passive reception and induced reaction on the part of the reader. Inversely, what the reader lives while he reads is closer, in nature, to what a dancer lives while she dances.

Owing to the ancient familiarity, the lore of musical analogy of poetics has been deplorably vague. It has been in two scopes, one about the musicalness in the formal structure of the poems in formal gestalt at various strata, the other about the music-ness of the sound-effect, the physical aspect... 'Music of structure' and 'Music of voice', in short. The poetry as the 'idea-music' as contrasted to the 'word-picture' is certainly an aspect of poetry, while objective experiments have proved, against our inner evidence that sounds do count, that, apart from the meaning, the vocal sounds are neutral and indifferent.

As a particular, though minor point, the performer's experience of a poem may be mentioned in regard to the accepted music-ness of the vocal side of poetry and its evaluation. Could it be too extreme an assertion to say that the beauty of the sounds of poems does not only, as they have been considered, consist in its transitive effect on hearing, either actual or imaginative, but also in the feel as one mentally or actually speaks it at his vocal organs? It brings in more or less physical or kinetic pleasure rather than the acoustic or musical pleasures occasioned on the hearer, in defining and estimating the music of poetry. Do not in most cases poems read and recite better than heard?

Sound effect, so it has been called, of poems could be in some measure the aesthetics of the dance at the mouth, in tune to the music of the meaning whatever the linguistic

4) Ref. pp. 96-98, Huisman, D., *L'Esthétique*, Collection QUE SAIS-JE? No. 635, Jap. ed., orig. 1954.

5) Welleck, R., *The Mode of Existence*, *Crit. and Essays in Crit.*, op. cit., p. 213.

and other properties of the poem may import. (The performance theory could be protracted to an extremity to say that a line of a poem is unique in its pleasure-index to a typist because it is not only pleasing to read, but also it types so well on the keyboard...it is absurd, admittedly, but is probable.)

The lyric, the aboriginal species of poems, surviving since music-poetry integrity was lost in the general atmosphere, is, in this aspect, a critical phenomenon. It retains much to be performed. “We can still say that the *lyric*—the poem written to be sung to music, whether by a group of people together, or by one singer to an audience, and the poetic drama, are forms of poetry which have a peculiar social role, different from that of poetry which is primarily intended for the reading of one person in solitude,”⁶⁾ comments T. S. Eliot. We also know that we no longer consider “to be sung to music”, the very condition of lyric, actual, but an assumed convention. And that “reading of one person in solitude” does not exclude the sense of participation in the manner of performance minus the audience. The condition of all the arts, including poetry, looks to the status of music, and modernist poetists even wanted to recover some property back to poetry from music. In poetry and in drama, Eliot further acknowledges that “a fine lyric or a great poetic play, is better enjoyed if we have not only heard it performed in public, but read it in private.”⁷⁾

Apart from such a quasi-physical participation of the reader in articulating the words in his mental or actual context, the reader-performer becomes himself a proxy for the poet—he ‘bodies forth’ what went on in the poet and now in himself, in a most efficient and accomplished lane, thanks to the skill and virtue of the original creator. The singer, giving it the voice, retraces the composer’s tension and its discharge in its consumated form, and the performer’s experience, while performing, is theoretically one order closer to the music than the audience. Thus the reader of the poem is more analogous in his relationship to the poetry inherent to the private performer of a music, than to the audience to whom a music is being played, either by the composer himself, or by the tertiary executor. It is actual at least as a private behavior even before he could comprehend what is being said.

6) Eliot, T. S., *Le Rôle Social des Poètes*, *op. cit.*

7) *ibid.*

“Poetry is,” Blackmur observes, “as near as words can get us to our behavior: near enough so that absolute moving attention which is beyond their prose powers. It is behavior, getting into our words, that sings.”⁸⁾ Though not in line with the pragmatist behaviorism, this behavioristic participation as the basis of aesthetic appreciation seems to be not without ground. The theory of ‘projection’ or of ‘empathy’ was somewhat in this cast but was short-sighted in its scope. The reader of a poem may identify himself with the characters of the story-context of a poem, or vaguely with the speaker of the voice, who is most likely the poet, etc., as his fancy permits. However, not much mention has been made apparently as to the reader’s position as one comparable to the player of the music on a prescribed musical composition. “The secret of artistic creation and of the effectiveness of art is to be found in a return to the state of *participation mystique*”⁹⁾ says Jung, the psychologist, perhaps indicating the emotion being so deep-rooted into the generic communal behavior, and prone to reduce itself back to the status of generic unity, concrete but inarticulate.

In music the sounds are themselves concrete as sensations and, regardless of their symbolic overtones, are comprehended ‘bodily’, whereas in poetry, the language (though not without its immediate physico-musical actuality of effects) being its medium, the proper content is not conveyed as is. Only a comparable sensation is induced when mental signs are translated into ‘emotional correlatives’ and registered, upon which individual private emotion is to be formulated. Thus the simplicity of the mental process that intercedes between the formula of motivation and the induced impact is relative to the immediacy of the feeling one gets in performing the poem. As Housman spoke, the intellect, procedural mechanism in this sense, is not the fount of poetry, but “it may actually hinder its production” or its enjoyment because poetry is then farther away from the status of music.

All the accepted characteristics of lyrics, either differentiating or describing, do converge upon this ‘spontaneity’ of emotional impact, whether as a natural outcome or an artificial product.

8) Blackmur, R. P., Lord Tennyson’s Scissors, *op. cit.*, p. 422.

9) Jung, C. G., Psychology and Literature, *Modern Man in Search of a Soul*, in *The Creative Process*, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

IV

And true realism, always and everywhere, is
that of the poets: to find out where joy resides,
and give it a voice far beyond singing.

— William James —

“Like the image, so dear to us, of the paradise whither we shall return not, music passes us by. Music is a thing we can thoroughly comprehend, but we totally fail to explain”¹⁾ says Schopenhauer. “‘Emotion’ is specific, individual and conscious; music goes deeper than this, to the energies which animate our psychic life, and out of these creates pattern which has an existence, laws, and human significance of its own,” says a musician, “It reproduces these far more directly and more specifically than is possible through any other medium of human communication”²⁾. Hence it is said of a poet, who is by profession a musician, not in sounds but in language, to quote Paul Claudel, “Tu n’expliques rien, ô poète, mais toutes choses par toi nous deviennent explicable.” “All the elaborate rules, and even all the revolts against any rules, exemplified in modern poetry, have their origin in the peculiar needs of the lyric”³⁾ observes H. Read. The air seems thoroughly small and dry to beat, although we have been at least successful in escaping from emotion and personality and the major disaster is averted—all at the expense of some essential myth. We hear Blake’s lament “The languid strings do scarcely move! / The sound is forc’d, the notes are few!” “Poetry, a kind of objectless religion which gave us the satisfaction without demanding the commitment...” whose content “operates only within a formal context and makes no claims beyond what is necessary to the aesthetic experience”⁴⁾ is now divided by lot between the hosts of un-singable lyrics and of singing-proses.

Not because lyricism as such is the thing needed at present, but because it stands at the experimental crisis of poetics, the prevailing, as well as the inherent, conditions for lyrics ought to be negotiated. “The word *lyric* has lost most of its original meaning; it now conveys, if it conveys anything at all, a certain quality in writing which may for the moment be content to call ‘emotional’”⁵⁾, to quote again from H. Read, in the

1) Huisman, D., *op. cit.*, p. 51.

2) Sessions, R., *op. cit.*, p. 46.

3) Read, H., The Nature of Metaphysical Poetry, *The Nature of Literature, op. cit.*, p. 69.

4) Krieger, M., *The New Apologist for Poetry*, p. 183, Univ. of Minnesota, 1956.

5) Read, H., *op. cit.*, p. 69.

background, we recall to ourselves the Platonic canon: "All good poets, epic as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems not by art, but because they are inspired and possessed."⁶⁾ S. Spender, an essentially lyricist modern poet states in this respect, "Song is far more difficult to define. It is the music which a poem as yet unthought of will assume, the empty womb of poetry for even in the poet's consciousness, waiting for the fertilizing seed..."⁷⁾ Spender's difficulty might be solved through the prescription given by the rigorist Y. Winters, commenting on some poems of R. Jeffers', "the difficulty here is that the lyric achieves its effect by the generalization of experience... and by the concentration of expression; lyrical poetry tends to be expository."⁸⁾ The poet is to submerge himself deep into the roots of the emotion and grasp it at its basic phase, where things are in their bare essence, and then step up the ladder the narrowest possible way to the surface, selecting the subjective correlative, so to speak, of emotions among the available linguistic materials. Then you have the lyric, whose aesthetic validity can be only attested by Housman's terrier. Its integrity is in its emotional consistency, deeply founded but apparently escaping the paraphrasing. The analogy of 'submerging' was of course Eliot's, and the value of poems as lyrics accordingly is "not the 'greatness', the components, but the intensity of the artistic process, the pressure, so to speak, under which the fusion takes place, that counts,"⁹⁾ which, below the surface, is consistent with his analogy. The pressure of the artistic process, the generalization of experience, the concentration of expression are conditions of the making of a lyric—a myth, because it is unexplicable; but a fact, because it is thoroughly comprehended. The only human behavior that turns the myth into the fact is the 'participation mystique'. In some poems, the lyrical basis may be obvious while in others it is hidden, yet no poem can stand if emotionally unfounded somewhere in some way. It is the regressive constitution of emotion that bring the man back to his original, while intellect tends to individualize him.

Because of such an organic basis of the lyrical phase of poetry, it is closely situated with music and drama in their concreteness, the invincible 'fact-ness'. The intellectualism of modern poetics is of course an additional pressure upon the site where the fusion is taking

6) *ibid*, Nature of Criticism, p. 133.

7) Spender, S., The Making of a Poem, *The Creative Process, op., cit.*, p. 124, orig. in *Partisan Review*, Summer, 1946.

8) Winters, Y., *op. cit.*, p. 33.

9) Eliot, T. S., *Tradition and the Individual Talent*, orig. 1919.

place. As Dylan Thomas put it, “the last thing they [poems] do is to flow; they are much rather hewn!¹⁰⁾”; modern lyrics are manufactured in the watertight compartment. The original spontaneity was not after all banished, but the structured inevitability was added to the lyrical idiom and to its property. “The primitive accepts his limitations through wisdom or its ignorance; the decadent endeavors to conceal them, or like some primitives, may never discover them; the primitive, however, treat of what he understands and the decadent of more than he understands,¹¹⁾” says Winters suggesting that the golden mean is the way of the ‘matured poetry’. The convention, the intellectual ‘gesture’, to man, is a tool for communication to mend the separation, but a burden and limitation if mentality fails. As long as the poet, whether modern or otherwise, with his genius, “makes the convention apparently disappear into the use to which he puts it,¹²⁾” the lyric will stand behind the poem in support, no matter the surface irrelevancies. Blackmur again says, “There might be a race of poets, that is, who would woo the excited miracles of absolute statement, not as a refuge, but to get their work done. For such a race, Hardy, Housman, Robinson, and Frost would not be masters but the nearest exemplars of the line of work into which the work, itself superior to theirs, of Yeats, Eliot, and Pound would disappear.¹³⁾” “For all the slightness of his output, he remains a lyricist whose mordant phrases have become part of the language, and whose idiom is recalled by poems of a very different stamp,¹⁴⁾” states B. Deutsch, of course referring to A. E. Housman, who died old. The poetic Mithridates told:

They say my verse is sad: no wonder;
 Its narrow measure spans
 Tears of eternity, and sorrow,
 Not mine, but man's.

— More Poems —

10) Treece, H., *Dylan Thomas*, Second ed., p. 121, 1959.

11) Winters, Y., *op. cit.*, p. 94.

12) Blackmur, R. P., *op. cit.*, p. 327.

13) *ibid*, p. 432.

14) Deutsch, B., *Poetry in our Time*, p. 14, Columbia Univ. Press, 1956.