Issues in the Instrumental Study of Poetry Reading

REUVEN TSUR

Stress Maximum in the Seventh Position

1. The world is charged with the grandeur of God
2. Burnt after them to the bottomless pit
3. How many bards gild the lapses of time
4. And with these words his temptation pursued

Instrumental Case Studies

First case study.

5. Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
   A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme...

Figure 1 Wave plot of “express A” in Hodge’s performance (ʔ indicates glottal stop)

Figure 2 Wave plot of “express A” in Sheen’s performance (no glottal stop)

listen to Douglas Hodge’s reading of Excerpt 5.

listen to Michael Sheen’s reading of Excerpt 5.
Second case study.

6. To shún the héaven that léads mén to this hél.

Listen to the reading Gielgud 1 of Excerpt 6.

Listen to the reading Gielgud 2 of Excerpt 6.

Figure 3 Wave plot and pitch extract of “To shun the heaven that leads men to this hell” Gielgud 1

1 The lower window presents the wave plot display which shows a plot of the wave amplitude (in volts) on the vertical axis, as a function of time (in milliseconds) on the horizontal axis. The upper window presents a fundamental frequency plot, which displays time on the horizontal axis and the estimated glottal frequency (F0 = pitch) in Hz on the vertical axis.
Third case study.

Fourth case study.

7. Now is the winter of our discontent

Made glorious summer by this sun of York

listen to Simon Russell Beale’s reading of Excerpt 7.
Figure 5  Wave plot and pitch contour of “Now is the winter of our discontent”

Figure 6  Wave plot and pitch contour of “Made glorious summer by this sun of York”

Figure 7  Wave plots of “discontent” and “York” excised from a reading of excerpt 3.

listen to the reading of “discontent” and “York”.
Fifth case study

8. merengj a messze multba visszaríván
muse, weeping and yearning back to the distant past

Listen to Ferenc Kállai’s reading of Excerpt 8.

Sixth case study.

9. And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!

Listen to Roger Lloyd Pack’s reading of Excerpt 9.

Figure 8 Wave plot and pitch extract of “And all should cry, Beware! Beware! / His flashing eyes, his floating hair!” read by Lloyd Pack.

Recorded Readings
Gielgud, Sir John reading Sonnets of William Shakespeare. Caedmon SRS 241 C-D.
Kállai, Ferenc reading Babits’s “Esti Kérdés”, on Varietas Delectat 3 (Hungaroton 14279).