Chapter 1

Perception-Oriented Theory of Metre

General Orientation

Rhythm is based on groups of *recurring* events of *different* kinds. *Differentiation* in this formula is as important as *recurrence.* "For just as a series of beats which are equal both in accent and duration will not give rise to an impression of rhythm (except in so far as the mind imposes its own arbitrary differentiation upon the stimuli) so, too, the smaller rhythmic groups will not give rise to larger patterns unless differentiation of accent or duration is present" (Meyer, 1956: 111).

I wish to mention here four versification systems that had a major impact on Western literatures: 1. Syllabic metre (predominant, e.g., in French and some other Romance languages) specifies the number of syllables in a verse line. 2. Tonic (accentual) metre (said to be predominant, e.g., in Biblical Hebrew verse) specifies the number of stresses in a verse line. 3. Quantitative metre (in classical Greek and Latin poetry, as well as in Mediaeval Arab and Hebrew poetry) specifies the order of longer and shorter events in a metric unit (foot), and the number of feet in a verse line. 4. Syllabotonic (syllabic accentual) metre (dominant in English poetry from, roughly, Chaucer to Yeats, and in some other modern languages, as in Russian, German and Hebrew) specifies both the number of syllables in a verse line, and the sequence of stressed and unstressed events in a foot. In fact, as I shall argue, it is the number of metrical positions rather than the number of syllables that are specified in syllabotonic verse.

Notice the phrase "in a verse line", occurring in the description of all these versification systems. This is no mere convenience of formulation. Poetic rhythm must be specified by units at two ranks at least, between which there may be a part-whole relationship. The verse line (the unit above) is a *whole*, that is, a system that determines the character of its parts; whereas, as we shall see in Chapter 4, it is the relative simplicity of the parts that determines the strength and integrity of the whole. Poetic rhythm, then, is not just an endless series of recurrent events. If it is to be granted greater significance than the monotonous tick-tocking of a clock, this "endless series" must be *articulated* into structured chunks amenable to the span of "immediate memory". Some generative linguists as Richard Cureton or David Gil propound a hierarchy that reaches up to the stanza or the whole poem; but for the kind of part-whole relationship I am interested in, governed by short-term memory, only these two levels (with perhaps some intervening levels) are relevant.

The present work is an attempt to explore the empirical implications of a speculatively elaborated perception-oriented theory of metre. The theory itself is yet another attempt to contribute to the concerted effort of prosodists to solve the follow-

ing riddle. English Renaissance poets thought that when writing, e.g., iambic pentameter lines, they were adopting the metric system used by Greek and Latin poets; yet they were doing something very different.Greek and Latin poets used a metric system based on the regular alternation of longer and shorter syllables, whereas in English metre one may observe the irregular alternation of stressed and unstressed syllables. This established a highly successful tradition that is dominant in English poetry to this very day, but the principles of which are poorly understood. During the past four or five hundred years, prosodists attempted to find the intuitive rules followed by poets as well as by their audience, both of whom recognize certain very disparate verse lines as, e.g., iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter within the syllabotonic system means that there is a unit of an unstressed and a stressed syllable; and that there are five such units in a verse line. In the first 165 lines of Milton's *Paradise Lost* there are two such lines. Consider the immediately observable stress pattern of the following six consecutive lines:

1. At ónce as fár as ángels kéns he viéws
   The dísmal situátion wáste and wíld,
   A dúngeon hórrible, on áll sídes róund
   As óne gréat fúrnace flámed, yet from thóse flámes
   No líght, but ráther dárkness vísible
   Sérved ónly to discóver síghts of wóe

No two of them have the same stress pattern, and only the first one of them has the afore said regularly alternating pattern. Yet, experienced readers of English poetry recognize all six as legitimate instances of the iambic pentameter. What is it we recognize in them as the same metre? The answer to this question is especially difficult because it relies, at one and the same time, on entities of different status: on immediately observable linguistic units, on mental patterns that are not necessarily present in the immediately observable linguistic material, and on a very strong auditory ingredient. At the present stage of research, this last item is the most problematic. It is clear to most people that poetic rhythm is an essentially auditory phenomenon. But most researchers in current studies pay only lip service to this notion, and give little or no attention to it. And those who do give serious attention to the auditory ingredient, rarely know how to integrate it into the rest of the information. It is claimed here that only a theory that recognizes the very complexity of the phenomenon of poetic rhythm and grants the auditory phenomenon its due share may ever hope to solve the "mystery". That is precisely what the present work attempts to do. And this is, I believe, one of its unique features.

The present work adopts from Wellek and Warren (1956, Chapter 13) the assumption that poetic rhythm can be accounted for with reference to three dimensions: linguistic stress pattern, metric pattern, and pattern of performance. When stress pattern and metre conflict, the reader accommodates them in a third, pattern of performance. This formulation allows us to view the issue in a wider aesthetic

perspective. Some aestheticians (e.g. Dewey, 1934; Pepita Haezrahi, 1956; Kris and Kaplan, 1965) conceive of the aesthetic object as an elegant solution to a problem. In the present case, there is a perceptual problem posed by the conflicting patterns of metre and linguistic stress; and a rhythmical performance is to provide the perceptual solution. A performance is rhythmical when both the stress pattern and the metre are accommodated in it in a natural way, so that both become perceptible at one and the same time; this is the "elegant solution". It is important to realize that this solution has a very strong auditory ingredient in it. Thus, the rhythmical performance of a deviant verse line becomes, in Coleridge's phrase, "the balance and reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities".

Generative metrists define the aim of their endeavour in such terms as "to devise a set of rules which would generate all 'metrical' lines, and no 'unmetrical' ones". In the following chapters I shall comment on the logical and practical difficulties involved in the notions of "metrical" and "unmetrical" lines. Here, however, only the main difference between the present approach and the generative tradition in this respect will be pointed out. Most theories attempt to discover those rules that would minimize the number of inadmissible, "unmetrical", chaotic lines in major English poetry. They earnestly believe that it is possible and desirable to devise such a set of rules, and it is only a matter of time and the researchers' ingenuity until this set of rules will be discovered. It exists, it lies there undiscovered, waiting for its Columbus.

The present conception, by contrast, assumes that it is not possible to discover, nor desirable to devise, such a set of rules. If it were possible, it would impair the artistic foundation of poetic rhythm. Aesthetic structure concerns, after all, "the balance and reconcilement of opposite or discordant qualities"; the more discordant the qualities, the greater the artistic achievement when reconciled in a rhythmical performance. When not reconciled, the verse line falls to pieces and returns to chaos. In other words, generative theories attempt to minimize the "discordance" of stress pattern and metre and have no answer for their "reconcilement" when conflicting; whereas the present approach attempts to maximize their "discordance" and offers ways for reconciling them. In yet other words, current generative phonology includes the performance dimension of poetic prosody in the linguistic component so as to minimize discordance; the present approach considers the performance dimension as a solution to a problem posed by the linguistic and the metric dimensions. This is one respect in which the present approach radically differs from most current theories. In cases of deviation, "prose rhythm" and metre may be conceived as analogous to the two incompatible terms of a metaphor. The reader registers their incompatibility and resolves them in a pattern of performance. The utmost limit of rhythmicality (as of the meaningfulness of a metaphor) is the reader's ability or willingness to cooperate, that is, to resolve the incompatibility of the two terms by a rhythmical performance (or, in the case of a metaphor, by a semantic interpretation). Thus, the present approach attempts to handle semantic and metric phenomena by a homogeneous set of principles.

Most current metrical theories would agree that certain deviations generate tension (which is artistically desirable), and some deviations generate chaos (which is artistically undesirable). Most theories envisage this difference in terms of "mapping rules" of one sort or other: what kinds of mapping of the stress pattern to the metric pattern are admissible, and what kinds are not? The present approach, by contrast, assumes that this is not a simple dichotomy. These rules can be arranged along a scale of mounting complexity; at a certain point one may draw the utmost limit of metricality: all deviations up to that point generate tension; beyond that — chaos. But is there some arguable principle that bestows upon these mapping rules the power to arbitrate between tension-generating and chaos-generating deviations? One difficulty with such a conception is that precisely the greatest masters of musicality in English poetry, such as Milton and Shelley, have grossly violated all such utmost limits hitherto proposed. But there is a more fundamental question there. Where do we get these principles from? Some theoreticians explicitly state, some tacitly assume that the "metrical grid" as well as the mapping rules are somehow internalized by both poet and audience. But on what authority do we proceed? How do we decide what is admissible and what is inadmissible? Is it merely a statistical convenience, no matter what it *sounds* like? Or is it rather the case that what sounds somehow rhythmical is admissible, and what does not, is inadmissible? If so, it is very different from a book-keeping activity, checking rhythmical configurations against mapping rules. This is where the auditory ingredient becomes all-important.

Two further comments are required at this point. First, intuitively, poetic rhythm is a musical phenomenon, rather than a rule-checking phenomenon. It is assumed here that it is governed by the principles of Gestalt theory, and constrained by the limitations of short-term memory, which functions in the auditory mode. Second, no reader can ever experience the interaction of the metric pattern and the stress pattern, or the sound stratum of a poem, unless it is *performed* in some way. As long as the rhythmic configurations of a verse line or a poem conform to the mapping rules, the very existence of *performance* tends to escape attention, and the book-keeping approaches tend to miss it. When the rhythmic configurations do not conform with the mapping rules, the book-keeping approaches rule the verse line "unmetrical"; for a perception-oriented approach, performance instances of such lines promise to be most revealing of the nature of a rhythmical performance. This seems to be the reason that, e.g., Halle and Keyser (whose theory I still believe is the best generative metrical theory) have reinvented Wellek and Warren's first two dimensions of poetic rhythm, but have entirely missed the third one: they checked the admissibility of verse lines against mapping rules, and not against their ears.

Since no criteria for metricality have yet been devised that have not been violated by masterful poets, and since some auditory quality is the final criterion of admissibility in matters of poetic rhythm, I have performed a small Copernican revolution, placing the constraints not in the verse structure, but in the reader's ability or willingness to perform it rhythmically. The reader, in turn, has at his disposal a stock of vocal and mental devices for accommodating the conflicting

patterns, or may generate new ones—all shaped and constrained by the Gestalt laws of perception, and the functioning and limitations of short-term memory. This is the reader's rhythmic competence.

The Iambic Pentameter Line and the Perception-Oriented Theory of Metre

The versification system in English poetry from Chaucer to Yeats is, as I have said, dominated by syllabotonic metre. The metre of the overwhelming majority of verse lines in this enormous corpus is the *iambic pentameter,* in which the foot consists of two events, with the second event of the foot stronger than the first, and in which there are five such feet in the verse line.

It will be readily seen that the vast majority of verse lines deviate from this abstract metric pattern to some extent or other. In what follows, we will be concerned with three questions of great importance. First, how does an experienced reader of poetry recognize a deviant verse line as, e.g., an iambic pentameter? Second, how does an experienced reader of poetry *handle* such a deviant line? And third, what are the perceived effects of such deviant verse lines?

Let us consider again the first three lines of excerpt 1. In the archetypal iambic pentameter line, every even-numbered syllable is stressed, every odd-numbered syllable is unstressed. In the first 150 lines of *Paradise Lost,* however, there are no more than two such lines, one of them being excerpt 2, below. Let us consider briefly three consecutive lines from excerpt 1 above (*Paradise Lost,* I. 59–61):

2. At ónce as fár as Ángels kén he viéws
   w s w s w s w s w s

3. The dísmal situátion stránge and wílde:
   w s w s w s w s w s

4. A dúngeon hórrible, on áll sídes róund
   w s w s w s w s w s

In excerpt 3, the first syllable of the word *situátion* is the fourth one in its line, that is, even-numbered; yet it is unstressed. In 4, by contrast, *sídes* is the ninth syllable, and should be unstressed; yet it is stressed. A fleeting glance at any relatively short passage in *Paradise Lost* will reveal a wide range of deviances from the abstract metre, resulting in lines that have little resemblance to one another, meterwise. Why, then, should we call them by the common name "iambic pentameter"? One way to handle this problem is the way Robert Bridges does, by providing in his book on Milton's prosody a list of "allowable deviations". Such an approach is authoritarian in its conception. It accepts deviations from regularity on Milton's authority: it is allowable, because Milton used it. This, however, does not explain the source of Milton's metrical authority: why do centuries of readers treat Milton's

verses as not merely "allowable", but as "Milton's miraculous organ voice"? Moreover, the common reader does not read poetry with a list of allowable deviations in hand. He *hears* when a deviation is allowable. What does he hear when he hears that some deviation *is* allowable?

This is where the Perception-Oriented Theory of Metre comes in. It adopts from Wellek and Warren the notion that to account for poetic rhythm, one must distinguish three patterns: metric pattern, stress pattern prose rhythm, and pattern of performance. Morris Halle and Jay Keyser have reinvented the first two of Wellek and Warren's patterns, and propounded a brilliantly simple generative theory of metre, which can generate—they claim—all metrical verse lines, and only metrical verse lines. By internalising the parsimonious rules of this theory—thus the argument goes—the reader can intuitively judge which is a metrical iambic pentameter line, and which is not. The great achievement of the Halle-Keyser theory is that it provides clear-cut definitions and "correspondence rules". The fuzzy term *ictus* of traditional metrics was an indefinite mixture of metrical and linguistic prominence. Halle and Keyser's definitions separate strong and weak metrical positions on the one hand, and linguistically stressed and unstressed syllables on the other; after which they provide "correspondence rules" for assigning the latter set to the former one.

Metric pattern consists of an abstract sequence of regularly alternating weak and strong positions, irrespective of the kind of syllables that occupy them. Stress pattern consists of a series of stressed and unstressed syllables; stress is assigned to a syllable by linguistic rules, irrespective of the metrical position that it occupies. For metrical purposes, only a binary distinction is made, between syllables that bear and those that do not bear lexical stress. Lexical stress is the stress that occurs in the most strongly stressed syllable of a lexical word. In English, for instance, lexical words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and non-clitic adverbs. Pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions and auxiliary verbs bear no lexical stress. Native speakers of a language have strong intuitions concerning linguistic stress as part of their linguistic competence. In addition, Halle and Keyser proffer a theoretical construct: *stress maximum.* "When a stressed syllable is located between two unstressed syllables in the same syntactic constituent within a line of verse, this syllable is called a 'stress maximum'" (Halle and Keyser, 1971: 156). The syllable *gar-* in the phrase "a garden" is a stress maximum, whereas in "a big garden" the stress maximum is "neutralized by an adjacent stress".

In terms of these distinctions, excerpt 2 above can be described by the correspondence rule: "Stressed syllables occur in strong positions only, and in all strong positions". Excerpt 3 can be described as "Stressed syllables occur in strong positions only, but not in all strong positions", whereas 4 can be described as "Stress maxima occur in strong positions only, but not in all strong positions". An unmetrical line is one in which a stress maximum occurs in a weak position. Excerpts 8–11 below contain lines that have, each, a stress maximum in the seventh (weak) position and are, thus, unmetrical under the Halle-Keyser theory. This constitutes a mounting

scale of complexity; each later rule describes a verse structure that arouses greater tension than the earlier one.

Over the seventies, there seemed to be an almost concerted effort of prosodists all over the English speaking world to find counter-examples to the Halle-Keyser theory in order to refute it. What seems to have frightened these prosodists was, precisely, what I regard as its greatest asset: its rigorous thinking and clearly-defined terms and generative rules. Halle and Keyser themselves, together with their critics, have found in the vast corpus of iambic pentameter lines from Chaucer to Yeats a total of eleven counter-examples, that is, verse lines that would be judged as "unmetrical" under the latest version of the Halle-Keyser theory. This is quite an admirable result for the theory.

Of all my arguments against Halle and Keyser's notion of metricalness, I shall state here only one, which I consider to be the most weighty. In an Appendix to my *Perception-Oriented Theory of Metre* (1977), I have added to the existing list over forty instances of "unmetrical" lines from the poetry of such major English poets as Shakespeare, Milton, Keats, Shelley, and others (see Appendix II below); eighteen of these lines are from *Paradise Regained.* This poses three serious problems for the Halle-Keyser theory and its notion of metricalness. First, a sufficiently big number of "unmetrical" lines was obtained, to make the distribution of "violations" far from random (I shall return to this issue in detail). Second, one must seriously question the utility of a notion of metricalness that legitimizes verse structures to which no poet ever has had recourse and, on the other hand, excludes verse structures that do occur, albeit rarely, in some of the greatest English poetry. Third, such a conception fails to make the proper distinction between poetic styles and verse lines that are on the approved side of the boundary of "metricalness", and those that are on the "wrong" side.

The Perception-Oriented Theory of Metre is a minor Copernican revolution, shifting the centre of the prosodic universe from the "metricalness" of the verse line to the reader's ability or willingness to perform it rhythmically. One may arrange verse lines along scales of mounting complexity. The performer has at his disposal a wide range of performance devices, with the help of which he may render the deviant lines rhythmical. If he encounters some kind of deviation to which he has never been exposed before, he may resort to old devices, or invent new devices, exploiting the potential of his cognitive resources. The utmost limit of rhythmicality is determined by the reader's ability or willingness to perform the verse line rhythmically. Different poets seem to have drawn this utmost limit at different points a variety of scales of mounting complexity. In other words, different poets assume in their readers different degrees of ability or willingness to perform a verse line rhythmically. Furthermore, one may expect every poet to strain this ability or willingness to some extent, and violate his own utmost limit of rhythmicality. But just as we may expect Pope to fix his utmost limit of rhythmicality at a lower point on the scales of mounting complexity than Milton, we also may expect that the former's violations of his own utmost limit of rhythmicality should be less bold in degree.

The theory adopts, then, from Wellek and Warren the notion that in order to account for poetic rhythm, one must distinguish three dimensions of the sound structure of poetry: metric pattern, stress pattern, and pattern of performance. It assumes with Halle and Keyser that the first two of these patterns must be defined and assigned independently from each other, and adds that the third one is the solution of a perceptual problem presented by the first two. *Performance* refers to the set of conditions under which the stress pattern and metric pattern tend to group into, and establish themselves as, perceptual units. In lines of little complexity, performance tends to go unnoticed; statements about performance become increasingly necessary as the complexity of the line increases. Theoretically, however, performance is a dimension of lines of *any* complexity, whether read aloud or silently.

The regular sequence of metric pattern exists in a reading as an expectation, as the reader's *metrical set*. When a stressed syllable occurs in a **s**trong position, it *confirms* metre; when in a weak position, it *disconfirms* it. A foot cannot be inverted, only its positions confirmed or disconfirmed. Thus, for instance, instead of an "inverted first foot" in the iambic metre I shall speak of a "stress displaced from the second to the first position". Now consider the following verse line:

5. That fósters the dróop-héaded flówers áll.
   w s w s w s w s w s
   (Keats, "Ode on Melancholy", 13).

Dróop- in a weak position disconfirms metre; it frustrates our expectations for metrical regularity, staggering the reader's certainty of the established pattern. This uncertainty lasts, until metre is reasserted in the next strong position. The experienced reader will perform the line so as to preserve at least the memory of regular recurrence until metre is reasserted. The successive stressed syllables are perceived as emphatically grouped together. Now consider a more complex case:

6. Strúng my ówn éars—I stróve hárd to escápe
   w s w s w s w s w s
   (Keats, "The Fall of Hyperion", I. 127).

In this line, metre is confirmed in the fourth, sixth and tenth positions, and disconfirmed in the first, third and seventh positions. Metric pattern is asserted for the first time as late as the fourth position, where it has a coinciding downbeat with the stress pattern. Having disconfirmed or suspended metre over a stretch of three syllables, a "perceptual force" (see Chapter 3) "pushing" toward the fourth position is experienced; when the fourth position is reached, a feeling of relief and certainty follows a feeling of suspense. The regular metre in such cases can be preserved in the reader's perception only if such a stretch of syllables is performed as a unit, as a stress group.

Stress Valley and Stress Maximum

Syntactically, *hard* in the seventh position is to be grouped with *strove* in the sixth. This seems to be required metrically too, since *hard* disconfirms the metre (and is "neutralized" by the preceding stress). It is, however, more difficult to *re*assert metre in advance, before the actual violation takes place. It demands some performance that enhances the memory of regular recurrence during the period of uncertainty. Some readers find it easier to group the last four syllables together emphatically and experience the relief and certainty in the tenth position, where the two groups, stress group and metric group, have a coinciding downbeat again (this is, for instance, how this line is performed by Richard Johnson on Argo PLP 1043).

7. Strúng my ówn éars—I stróve hárd to escápe
w s w s w s w s w s

Such optional groupings are an important part of the *performance pattern.* I have called such a group a *stress valley.* It has an exceptionally strong shape: it is symmetrical and closed. It consists of two stresses embracing two slacks; or, it may be described as a shape the second half of which is the exact mirror image of its first half. In Chapter 2 I will discuss the Limited Channel Capacity hypothesis. According to this hypothesis, there is a rigid upper limit to the amount of information that an organism is able to process at any given time. When the information to be processed exceeds this limit, the organism may have recourse to a variety of cognitive strategies and devices. One way of handling an excess of information is to *recode* it in a more efficient manner, so as to require less processing space. A piecemeal treatment of metric deviation may generate such an excess of information. In excerpt 7, for instance, one must remember, in the sweep of the reading, that *hárd* is a stressed syllable, and that the position it occupies is weak; that *to* is an unstressed syllable, and that the position it occupies is strong; and that it should be the other way around. In terms of the Limited Channel Capacity hypothesis, a stress valley constitutes the *recoding* of some otherwise irregularly distributed stresses, so as to save the extra mental space needed for the realization of the divergent stress pattern and metre. Instead of loading the piecemeal information onto his memory, the reader *hears* the sequence of syllables as grouped into a closed, symmetrical, stable unit; and remembers, at the same time, the sequence of regularly alternating weak and strong positions.

The stress valley, with the concomitant mental processes indicated above, proves to be a very powerful tool for rhythmically performing a verse line in which there occur such extreme violations of metre as a *stress maximum in a weak position.* It had to be discovered, then, whether an experienced reader would perform a stress maximum in the seventh position, for instance, as part of a stress valley, or in

some other pattern of performance. For this I asked, at a time when I had no access to electronic instruments, five faculty members at the English Department of the University of Sussex, to read aloud the following lines:

8. Buffet and scoffe, scorge, and crucifie mee!
9. Burnt after them to the bottomless pit
10. How many bards gild the lapses of time
11. And with these words his temptation pursued

The readings were performed separately by the five readers, who had no advance knowledge of the stress valley hypothesis. They were asked to read the four lines *rhythmically,* so as to preserve the stress pattern of the words and as much of the metre as possible. After having read the lines, we discussed the readings, in order to make sure that my description fitted what the readers felt they had done.

I formulated two specific expectations: first, that the performance pattern would indicate a stress valley and second, that if excerpts 8–10 are performed with a closing stress valley, the readers would experience some extra difficulty with 11. The results left little room for doubt. The performances of four out of the five readers were strikingly similar (my discussion will refer only to these four readings). The fifth was somewhat ambiguous: it *could* be interpreted as a stress valley, but need not be. In the ensuing discussion, the four were quite surprised, but *sure* that they had stressed the seventh syllable more strongly than they would have normally done (even though it was odd-numbered). The reason for this seems to be quite clear in view of the Gestalt assumptions of the present study. Sharpening, that is, exaggerating the unfitting detail, generates a strong perceptual force pushing toward the end, by intruding upon the regular flow of the iambic stream. By the same token, it helps to segregate the symmetrical stress valley; and causes relief when the stress valley and the line ending have a coinciding downbeat. The four readers were also in agreement with one another that the last four syllables were performed *as a group,* closer in time to one another, and that the unstressed syllables in mid-group were performed somewhat more rapidly than usual.

My second expectation, too, was amply fulfilled. Three out of the four readers were puzzled by *temptation.* They had several tries before they found a satisfactory performance, with such remarks as "It's funny" … "It's interesting" … "That's different" … "Are you sure Milton didn't stress *temp-* rather than *-ta-?"* The fourth reader performed the line at his "first go", but his solution was unmistakably the same as the one at which the others eventually arrived. All four solved the problem by a marked prolongation of *temp-* with a slight break after it. In the aftermath of the reading, they agreed that the difficulty lay in the need to *isolate* the last four syllables *as a group* (since the group begins in the middle of the word *temptation).* In-

strumentally analysed readings made twenty-five years later provide evidence for exactly the same kinds of performance (see Chapter 6).

In excerpt 10, the first syllable of *lapses* constitutes a stress maximum in a weak position; according to the Halle-Keyser theory, this renders the line unmetrical. S. J. Keyser suggests that this "metrical lapse" is a kind of onomatopoeia, a metric pun. According to the conception of performance outlined above, and confirmed by the foregoing experiment, the four syllables of *lapses of time* can be performed rhythmically, by grouping them together. This renders the line acceptable, and the *ad hoc* explanation of "metric pun" becomes superfluous. *Ad hoc* explanations should always be the last refuge of the theoretician. Where a small number of counter-examples may call for *ad hoc* explanations, the discovery of a larger number may provide the basis for a more systematic explanation. Such a systematic explanation may gain enormously if the cognitive rationale behind it can be clearly brought out. (For a more extensive discussion of this issue see Appendix).

As I have mentioned above, in the "classical" papers on generative metrics from the years 1966 to 1971, a total of some eleven instances of stress maxima in weak positions are listed. Nine of them occur in the seventh position, two in the third. Some of them are "legitimized" by assigning "emphatic stress"; some are explained away by postulating an Italian influence of "double trochee", and one as a "metric pun". The number of the remaining instances is negligible indeed. This, however, changed with my addition of over forty instances of stress maxima in weak positions from major English texts. There are four positions in a pentameter line available for violation: III, V, VII, and IX (in the first weak position of the line no stress maximum may occur, by definition). An even distribution of violations in weak positions would allocate some 11 or 12 in each available position. There are, however, some 27 or 28 in the seventh position. It would be somewhat unreasonable to suppose that well over half the instances of "scribal errors", "poetic oversight", and "metric pun" should have occurred precisely in this position. About one third of the violations occur in the third position; and only a few, rather doubtful instances, in positions V and IX. In position IX I have found only two instances, involving emphatic stress (to be discussed at length in Chapter 9).

In order to account for this uneven distribution of stress maxima in weak positions, one must assume that the line constitutes a *whole,* that is, a system that determines the character of its parts (that is, in the present instance, the character of its strong positions) and that some strong positions are stronger than others. Strong positions differ in their *grouping potential.* This difference can be observed with respect to both grouping by metric boundary and grouping by stress. In Chapter 4 I shall establish in the iambic pentameter line a hierarchy of metric boundaries governed by the laws of perception, with a decreasing grouping potential. The highest metric boundary is the line terminal, following the tenth position; next come the unmarked caesura (following the fourth position), and the marked caesura (following the sixth position); the lowest grouping potential is attributed to the second and eighth position, which are never followed by a metric boundary. As we shall see be-

low in Figure 1, in a corpus of five poets, Spenser, Milton, Thomson, Pope and Shelley, by far the greatest regularity, without exception, occurs in the tenth position of the iambic pentameter line; the second highest in the fourth.

Using the number 2 to designate a boundary of greater weight than 1 (not necessarily *twice* as great), but smaller than 3, the number 1 to designate anything between "negative potential" and just "smaller than 2", we may assign the following potential of grouping to the various strong positions: X: 4; IV: 3; VI: 2; II & VIII: 1. One should expect the greatest number of stress maxima to occur in those weak positions in which they do least violence. Conversely, one should expect the smallest number of stress maxima to occur in those weak positions in which most violence is done to the metre. In this respect, we may well profit from the application of Gestalt theory to rhythm in music:

> Whenever an accent is suppressed, […] the mind, searching for focal stability of an accent with reference to which it can group weak beats, places particularly stress on the subsequent downbeat. Furthermore, the stronger the potential of the unrealized accent—the stronger it had been had it not been suppressed—the more effective the syncopation and the more forceful the impulse toward the next accent (Cooper and Meyer, 1960: 103).

Now, a stress maximum in a weak position entails the suppression of the stresses in the adjoining strong positions. Consequently, the degree of violation by a stress maximum in a weak position may be expressed in terms of the adjacent strong positions in which the suppression of stress is entailed. Position numbers are designated by Roman numerals, their grouping potential by positive Arabic numbers; degrees of violation are designated by negative Arabic numbers.

11.	II		IV		VI		VIII		X
	1		3		2		1		4
		III		V		VII		IX	
		–4		–5		–3		–5	

Thus, we have established a scale of violations by stress maxima in weak positions (as the sum of the potential values of the unrealized adjacent stresses). According to our conception of metricalness expounded above, we should expect some poets (such as Pope) or some readers (such as Halle and Keyser) to draw the limit of metricalness so as to exclude all violations; others, by contrast, might include –3 and –4 but exclude –5 as unmetrical (e.g., Shakespeare and Milton); other poets, again, like Shelley and Keats, may even occasionally resort to –5. We should expect the greatest number of stress maxima in weak positions to occur in the seventh position, the next greatest in the third position, and so on. This is precisely the case.

The exclusion of –5 as the greatest degree of violation is not a matter of pure arithmetics. The number refers to very real issues in metrical terms. A stress

maximum in the ninth position means no confirmation of metre in the last, decisive position of the line (I have found, indeed, only stress maxima resulting from emphatic stress in the ninth position). A stress maximum in the fifth position entails the suppression of both grouping stresses and grouping boundaries, both in the fourth and the sixth positions: the very positions in which violation could be counteracted by grouping.[1]

Another aspect of this issue is the position in which "focal stability" is sought for. The stronger the grouping potential of a realized stress, the more forceful the impulse, the "bump" that it can absorb from the violating stress maxima. Conversely, if the degree of violation is greater than the grouping potential of the subsequent realised stress, the state resulting from the reinstatement of metre will be short of perfect equilibrium. There will be a further urge to reach focal stability in position IV or X. In the case of a stress maximum in a weak position, the mind must group not only "weak beats", but a whole stress valley beginning with a *violating stress.* When a stress maximum occurs in the seventh (weak) position, which is the overwhelming majority of instances, "the mind, searching for focal stability of an accent with reference to which it can group weak beats, places particularly stress on the subsequent downbeat", which in this case happens to be precisely the tenth (last) position. In this way, the verse line is considerably weakened just before the end, and powerfully closed and reasserted in the last position. Paradoxically, then, the gross violation of metre drastically increases the perceptual coherence and unity of the line.

Metrical Styles

We have been treating the verse line as a *whole,* that is, as a system that determines the character of its parts. In the present context I can give only a few suggestions as to the nature of this system. First, one may notice that deviations from metric pattern do not occur in a random way. A deviation at one point of the line requires confirmation of metre at another, near point. If the first foot is "inverted", one may expect to find a stressed syllable in precisely the fourth position. If there is no stressed syllable in the fourth position, one may expect to find it in the second and probably in the sixth. Lines such as "Monuments of unaging intellect" (see Chapter 2, excerpts 13–14) seem to be uncommon. As we have just seen, there are special "centres of gravity", so to speak, around which the unstressed and deviating syllables can be grouped. Metrical styles can be compared in terms of the proportion of devia-

[1] In Milton, I have found only one line in which a stress maximum may occur *either* in the fifth *or* in the seventh position; all the other examples of stress maxima in fifth position were found in Keats and Shelley. Some of these cases involve verbs followed by prepositional phrases; considering the degree of violation involved, some readers may regard the prepositions as stressed verbal particles, neutralizing the stress maxima.

tions to strength of grouping. We should find one such grouping point in the last position of the line. We should expect to find another grouping point as near the middle as possible. In the iambic hexameter, we should expect one in the sixth position (indeed, in Shelley's "Adonais", the sixth position of the dodecasyllabic lines is the only one in which we find no deviation throughout this highly deviant poem). In the pentameter line, we should expect the grouping points at the fourth or the sixth positions. Since the unmarked caesura is after the fourth position (see Chapter 4), that position must be regarded as the stronger grouping point. The displacement of stress from the second to the first position (that is, "inverting" the first foot) entails reinstatement at the fourth position; indeed, it is more acceptable than displacement from the fourth to the third position (entailing reinstatement at the sixth position; for another possible explanation, see Appendix).

A statistical investigation of the first one hundred lines of *Paradise Lost, An Essay on Criticism, The Seasons,* and of the first twenty stanzas of *Faerie Qvene* and of "Adonais" (160 decasyllabic lines in each of the two last-mentioned poems) shows that this is indeed the case. In all these poems, the two highest peaks in the graph of stresses can be observed in the fourth and tenth positions.

The total number of deviations in a poem, though an important indicator of its metrical style, is not the most accurate one. I have already suggested some qualitative differences between kinds of deviance. Now I propose briefly to consider some quantitative relationships between deviance and grouping. The number of deviations per hundred lines in Pope does not differ greatly from their number in Milton. But there is a significant difference in their distribution. In Milton and Shelley deviations are more evenly distributed than in Thomson and Pope. That is, the pentameter lines of Milton and Shelley have *weaker* shapes than those of Pope and Thomson in two important respects (I use *weak* in the descriptive sense of Gestalt psychology, and not in an evaluative sense): in the poems of the former, there is a larger number of deviant syllables than in those of the latter; in the latter, deviant and unstressed syllables are more emphatically grouped around specific "centres of gravity" than in the former. In what follows, I shall most briefly compare these five metric styles in three respects: (1) the number of deviant syllables; (2) the relative obtrusion of the graphic peaks in the fourth and tenth positions; (3) the proportion of the number of deviations in the first, second and most deviant foot in midline (6th or 8th) to the total number of deviations per hundred lines.

	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**	**7**	**8**	**9**	**10**	**total**
Spenser	21	25	6	9	5	18	7	22	4	4	121
Thomson	29	27	12	9	4	23	3	34	6	0	147
Pope	40	32	14	5	10	34	5	14	1	1	156
Milton	35	26	9	21	13	26	12	25	8	5	180
Shelley	30	29	12	21	12	33	9	25	10	6	187

Table 1 Percentage of deviations in each position (whole numbers)

	2	**4**	**6**	**8**	**10**
Spenser	74	91	89	78	9
Thomson	73	91	77	66	100
Pope	68	95	66	86	99
Milton	74	79	74	75	95
Shelley	71	18	77	75	93

Table 2 Percentage of stresses in even-numbered positions (whole numbers)

The most important single piece of information that emerges from the graph in Figure 1 below is that in all poets, without exception, the highest peak of regularity occurs in the last (tenth) position, the second highest peak in the fourth position—no matter how deviant a given poet may be. This strongly suggests that the line is not just a casual aggregation of weak and strong positions, but a system that determines the character of its parts. The second most important thing is that the verse of the two most deviant poets, Milton and Shelley, is weak both on the syllable level and the line level: not only is the contrast between stressed and unstressed syllables obscured, but also between the highest peaks in the fourth and tenth positions and the lowest ebbs in the sixth position.

One of the determinants of strong Gestalt is clear contrast. A poem which has a small number of deviant syllables (as Spenser's) has a stronger Gestalt than a poem with a large number of deviant syllables (as Shelley's). In the former, there is clear contrast between *s* positions occupied by stressed syllables and *w* positions occupied by unstressed ones. In the latter, *s* positions are frequently occupied by unstressed syllables whereas *w* positions by stressed syllables. This blurs the contrast, although the *general tendency* for regular alternation is preserved (up to over 80%). Between these two extremes there is a third possibility of subsuming the deviant stress pattern in a pattern of grouping around "centres of gravity". The strong shape of Spenser greatly differs from the strong shape of Pope and Thomson. The latter two allow a larger number of deviant syllables than Spenser (that is, the contrast between prominence and non-prominence is more blurred in their poems). This they counterbalance by superimposing a grouping pattern in which contrasts are rather marked. Notice that in all the poems under examination the highest occupancy of *s* positions by stress occurs in the fourth and tenth positions. But whereas in Milton and Shelley the occupancy of all *s* positions but the last moves between 74 and 79, and 71 and 78 respectively, in Pope the contrast between highest and lowest occupancy is between 66 in the sixth position, and 95 in the fourth; in Thomson between 66 in the eighth position, and 91 in the fourth. Notice, also, that the occupancy of the tenth position by stressed syllables is over 90% in all five poets. This can be explained by a need to seal off the line emphatically at its end. However, the difference between Pope and Thomson on the one hand, and Milton and Shelley on the other, is conspicuous too, though on a smaller scale. In the one hundred lines by

Thomson, no unstressed syllable occurs in a tenth position; in Pope only one occurs (in the first two cantos of "The Rape of the Lock" no tenth position is occupied by an unstressed syllable, a total of 290 lines) whereas in Milton's one hundred lines, five unstressed syllables occur in tenth positions, in the 160 lines by Shelley eleven (6.9%) and even in those by Spenser five (3.1%).

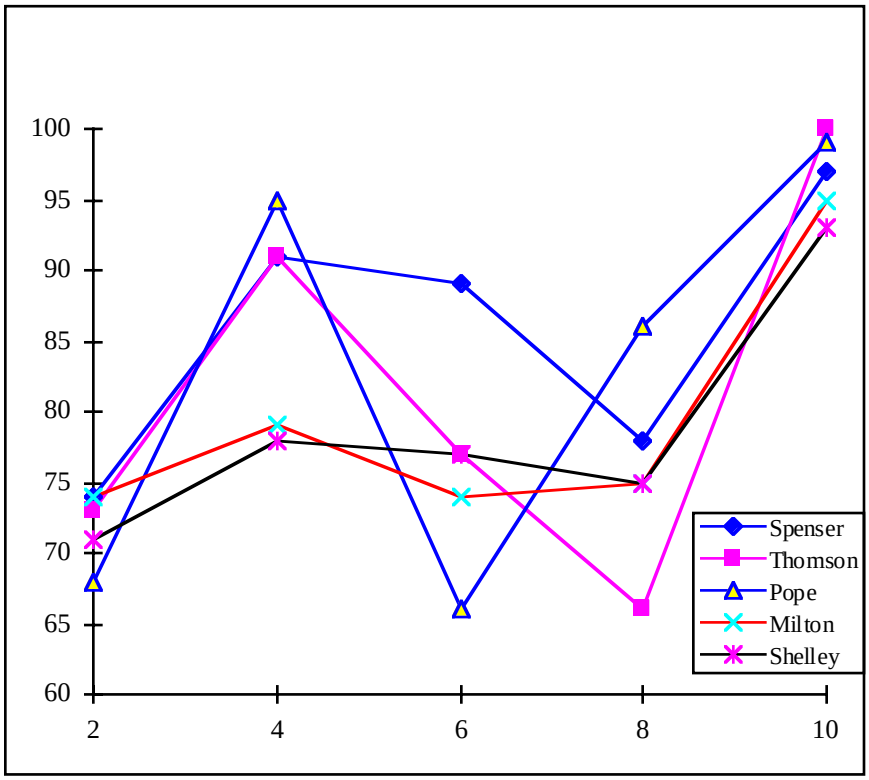

Figure 1 Percentage of stresses in even-numbered positions in five poets

Thus we have, roughly, three types of prosodic styles. The two most deviant poets of the five blur the contrast both between regularly alternating prominent and non-prominent events as well as between the crest in the fourth position and the lowest ebb in the sixth or eighth position. Whereas in Milton and Shelley angles descending from the crest and ascending from the ebb are obtuse, in the poems of Pope and Thomson, where grouping contrasts are sharp, they are acute. In Spenser, the least deviant of the five poets, both the angles at the crest and at the ebb are larger than in Pope and Thomson. We may say that Spenser's metre has strong shape, whereas the shape of his line as a whole is rather weak. In Pope and Thomson the shape of the whole line is much stronger, at the expense of metric regularity. In Milton and Shelley, both the shape of the line and of metre is rather weak (hence the markedly emotional quality of these verses). In the verse of Pope and Thomson the prosodic

contrast between unity and diversity is far sharper and more persistent than in the verse of the other three poets considered here. On the other hand, in poems by Milton and Shelley we find, occasionally, such daring devices of unity-in-diversity as a stress maximum in the seventh position. To the difference between Spenser's, Thomson's and Pope's versification on the one hand, and that of Milton's and Shelley's on the other I usually refer by the contrasting terms "convergent" and "divergent" poetry.

Here is another way to manifest the differences in these three prosodic styles. We may expect Pope and Thomson to concentrate their deviant syllables either in the first two positions, or in that particular position in midline which, in the respective structures of their lines, is most tolerant of deviations (the sixth in Pope, the eighth in Thomson). We may expect Milton and Shelley to distribute their deviant syllables more evenly. In Shelley 48.1% of the 191 deviations per hundred lines occur in positions 1, 2 and 6; in Milton, 48.3% out of 180 deviations; Pope has the greatest proportion of deviations in the favoured positions, 67.9% out of 156; 61.3% out of Thomson's 147 deviations occur in his favoured positions: 1, 2 and 8. Were this pattern to continue, an even higher proportion of Spenser's deviations should be in his favoured positions; he, however, differs from the pattern established by the other four poets; Spenser allocates 55.6% of his 124 deviations in his favoured positions (1, 2, 8). We may conclude, then, that Pope's regularity, in spite of the fairly large number of his deviations, is the most structured. Spenser is rather casual, with no conspicuous focuses. Milton and Shelley seem to have aspired to somewhat evenly distributed, deliberate irregularity. A comparison between Pope's and Spenser's verse suggests a principle for which we shall find supporting evidence throughout the present study: the better the articulation of the higher unit (the line) in perception, the greater the number of deviances tolerated at the lower level. Even a hard-boiled classicist like Pope can afford a relatively great number of metric deviances, since his line has a well-focused shape.

One may observe further that the lowest ebb of regularity in midline in Milton, and Pope is in the sixth position, whereas in Shelley, Thomson and Spenser, the lowest ebb is in the eighth position. This probably suggests two different structural principles. Apart from the beginning of the line, where deviance is more acceptable, Milton and Pope place the greatest number of deviations after the first centre of gravity, as near the middle as possible, where the balance of the line is least susceptible of being distorted. This positioning leaves plenty of room to compensate for them and strengthen the metre by the tenth position. Shelley, Spenser and Thomson, in contrast, weaken their line as near the end as possible, bringing compensation sharply into focus. The prevalent structure of lines with the eighth position omitted in Thomson is that of

12. In sóft assémblage, lísten to my sóng ("Spring", 8)

The omission of stress in position 8 demands a stronger confirmation in the tenth. Thus, it turns out to be a "tame" variant of the principle which places the largest number of stress maxima in *w* positions in the seventh. This becomes clear in:

7

13. While music wakes around, veiled in a shower ("Spring", 3),

and even clearer in:

7

14. The mountains lift their green heads to the sky ("Spring", 17).

Solidarity and Pope's Metrics

I have already alluded to one illuminating implication of these findings: the numerical difference between the most and least deviant poets is rather small: 66 deviations per 100 lines, that is, per 1000 positions. Pope is generally considered as the prototype of the rule-abiding poet; Milton as an exceptionally deviant poet. The difference between them is 24 deviances per 1000 positions. The number of deviances seems, then, to be only one factor in the difference between their metrical styles. Another difference lies in the different shapes of their archetypal iambic pentameter lines just discussed. Furthermore, deviant stresses display scales of markedness: some deviances are less natural, more difficult for a rhythmical performance, than others; and in Milton's poetry there is a greater number of more marked deviances than in Pope's. Consider the problem of consecutive stresses. In the iambic metre, weak and strong positions alternate regularly. Thus, any sequence of two consecutive stressed syllables will constitute some degree of deviance. Anticipating my argument in Chapter 5, in phrases like *bláck bírd* the rightmost stressed syllable bears the strongest stress; in compounds like bláckbírd, the leftmost. Accordingly, when a compound begins in a weak position it is more marked than when it begins in a strong position. In Book I of Milton's *Paradise Lost* 15 out of 20 compounds begin in weak positions; in many hundreds of verse by Pope, all compounds, without exception, begin in strong positions. Phrases like *bláck bírd* end in a strong position in Pope's poetry; in Milton's, sometimes they end in a weak position. Or consider Donne's phrase "shall behóld Gód" : a stressed syllable in a weak position when an-
w s w s
other syllable of the same word is in a weak position is more marked than, e.g., "shall be óld Gód" when the stressed syllable in a weak position is a monosyllabic
w s w s
word. In Pope's poetry there are only instances of the latter type; in Milton's there are quite a few of the former type as well. Or consider the first line of *Paradise Lost:*

15. Of Mán's fírst disobédience and the frúit
w s w s w s w s w s

Here the second stress is displaced from the fourth to the third position (second "inverted foot"). In Pope we shall find many instances of displacement of stress from the second to the first position, but it is quite unlikely that we shall find a displacement from the fourth to the third position.

I have claimed that backward compensation is less natural for a poet (or, for that matter, for a reader) than forward grouping or compensation. I have also claimed that a construction like "Shall behóld Gód" is less natural than "Shall be óld Gód". Likewise, stress displacement to the left ("inverted foot") in midline, even after a syntactic break, is less natural than in the first position of a line. I have mentioned some evidence that "strongly suggests" or "makes it plausible" that this is so.

Now suppose we could show that there exists "solidarity" (Roman Jakobson's term in connection with phonological universals) among the various devices for neutralization; that is, certain devices of type *b* do not occur in contexts where certain other devices of type *a* do not occur as well, whereas devices of type *a* do occur in some contexts without devices of type *b*. For instance, suppose we could find poets who neutralize both backward and forward, and poets who neutralize forward but not backward; but no poets who neutralize backward but not forward. Or suppose we could find poems in which stressed syllables of both monosyllabics and polysyllabics may occur in *w* positions before a stressed syllable, along with poems in which only stressed syllables of monosyllabics occur in *w* positions before stressed syllables; but no poems with only stressed syllables of polysyllabics occurring in *w* positions before stressed syllables. Or suppose we could find poems in which there are stress displacement to the left both at the beginning of a line, and in midline after a major syntactic juncture, along with poems in which such displacements occur at line beginnings but not in midline, even after major syntactic junctures; but could find no poems where there are "inverted feet" in midline with or without preceding major syntactic junctures but none at line beginnings.[2] This would indeed strongly

[2] The issue of stress displacement to the left is illuminating. In the first 100 lines of "An Essay on Criticism" there are 21 stresses displaced to the first position (as compared to 16 in *Paradise Lost* and 17 in *The Seasons* per 100 lines). According to the Halle-Keyser theory, any stress may be displaced to the left, provided that the preceding strong position is occupied by a stressed syllable. In Pope I have found no such instances in midline. As I shall insist time and again throughout the present study, 17th- and 19th-century poets frequently displaced a stress to the seventh position, for good perceptual reasons. Eighteenth-century poets did this much less frequently (though there are a few instances in *The Seasons).* In his "versification" of Donne's *Satyres,* Pope eliminated such instances, even when they constituted no stress maximum. Chatman (1960: 165) quotes the following two lines from Donne's *Satyres* as examples of the few lines which are "easily adjusted to a more regular pattern":

suggest that there are scales of ascending complexity and tension; and that different poets draw the boundary of their own "metricalness" at different points on these scales.

Now this appears to be precisely the case. In the poems by Shakespeare, Milton and Shelley, for instance, all the devices of both types *a* and *b* occur, whereas in Pope's poems only the devices of type *a* occur. I have as yet found no poet in whose poems only devices of type *b* are found, either in all three respects of (1) backward compensation; (2) stressed syllable of a polysyllabic in a w position; and (3) "foot inversion" in midline; or in any one respect of these respects. To these one more device will be added in Chapter 4: unmarked caesura (after position 4), or marked caesura (after position 6). It is probably not surprising, then, that stress maxima in *w* positions have been found only in poems by poets who use devices of both types *a* and *b* for neutralising stress maxima. Such solidarity may exist also between neutralization by syntactic boundary and by adjacent stress. The former appears to be much rarer than the latter and Pope seems to have had recourse to the latter only.

One could speculate further on this matter of solidarity in connection with the distribution of devices in various languages. Thus, for instance, in modern Hebrew poetry, there are usually no "inverted feet" in midline, and only a few at line beginnings. In Russian poetry there are, normally, "inverted feet" only at the beginning of lines and only when monosyllabics are involved. In English and Hungarian poetry, there are normally "inverted feet" both at line beginnings and in midline and both when monosyllabic and polysyllabic words are involved.

I suggested earlier that there are some strong psychological reasons to believe that a backward compensation for a stress in a *w* position is more marked than a forward compensation. This happens to coincide with the feeling of some contemporary readers. More important, it seems to coincide with Pope's feeling. We *can* infer this, because he draws his boundary of "metricalness" precisely at this distinction. The "rules" for Pope's iambic pentameter can be given as follows:

a. Stressed syllables occur *mainly* in *s* positions (not *only* and not in *all).*
b. A stressed syllable may occur in a *w* position under the following conditions:
   CONDITION I: that it occurs in position 1 and/or is *followed* by a stressed syllable (that is, no strings of stresses are allowed which end in a *w* position);
   CONDITION II: that it constitutes a monosyllabic word.

---

	7 A thing which would have pos'd Adam to name (20)
becomes	8 A Thing which *Adam* has been pos'd to name (25);
and again,	6 7 Which dwell at Court for once going that way (16)
becomes	6 8 Who *live* at *Court,* for going once that way! (23).

Notice, then, that according to these rules "Shall behold God" is "unmetrical", whereas "Shall be old God" is "metrical". Likewise, the first phrases of Milton's *Paradise Lost* and Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale", "Of Mán's fírst disobédience" and "My héart áches" will be "unmetrical", whereas "Mán's éarly disobédience" and "Oh my héart áches" would be "metrical". The number of violations of these rules in Pope does not seem to approximate the number of stress maxima in *w* positions in *Paradise Regained.* But even should intensive investigation collect twice or three times as many examples, it would still not dispute Pope's strong bias against ending a string of stresses in a *w* position. I suggested earlier that we should expect any poet to stretch to the utmost the limit of cooperation demanded from the reader, and to violate his own set rules. I shall propose a further model which will place these violations in aesthetic and diachronic perspectives.

My claim is that rules exist in order to be violated to *some* extent. Thus, it should not be unexpected to find among the thousands of lines by Pope some strings of stresses ending in *w* positions, as in:

16. Thus Wit, *like Faith,* by éach Mán is apply'd

(An Essay on Criticism, 396)

17. Conceal, disdain do áll thíngs but forget

(Eloisa to Abelard, 200)

Such a backward compensation, deviant in Pope's poetry, has a similar impact to that of a stress maximum in a seventh position in Milton's poetry. It mobilizes the reader's cooperation one step further than is usual. This is one way to demonstrate that, according to the present theory, anything does not go; in fact, in Pope's case, less "goes" than in Milton's or, for that matter, than what the Halle-Keyser theorywould allow. What in Pope results in a negligible number of "ametrical" lines, appears to be more frequent and perfectly "metrical" in Milton or Shelley. On the other hand, what in Milton or Shelley would count as "ametrical", resulting in a negligible number of deviant lines, would be hardly imaginable in Pope. When encountering a stress maximum in the seventh position in Pope's poetry, two steps removed from what is "metrical" for that poet, one is inclined to postulate some *ad hoc* explanation, such as "different pronunciation in Pope's time" rather than admit the case.[3]

[3] Thus, for instance, it did not seem plausible to me that Pope should have resorted to figures so far removed from what is usually acceptable to him as in

a. On life's vast ocean diversely we sail ("An Essay on Man", II. 107)

There are, then, qualitative scales of markedness, on each of which Pope and Milton draw the utmost limit of their own metricality at different points. Concerning these qualitative scales of markedness one should make five observations. First, they have been established on statistical grounds (relative frequency of items), and on cognitive grounds (relative difficulty of processing); the two criteria are significantly related. Second, there is "solidarity" (Roman Jakobson's term) between the items on a scale: poets will not resort to some more marked option, unless they have recourse to less marked ones on the same scale. Third, the poets who have a greater number of deviations are the ones who typically resort to the more marked deviations. Fourth, poets seem to draw the upper limit of their own metricality on each one of these scales; and there appears to be a tendency for consistency between these upper limits: poets tend to aim, intuitively, at similar degrees of markedness on the various scales; but the scales are independent variables. Fifth, most poets have a negligible number of verse lines which violate the utmost limit of their own metricalness. But it is not enough to register these violations; one must also account for their rhythmical assimilation into the delivery instance. There are, then, marked kinds of deviations which would be counted as metrical in Milton or in Shelley, but not in Pope or Thomson. (An example of how these markedness scales work will be considered in Chapter 4, with reference to the placement of caesura).

5

b. Each seeming want compensated of course (ibid., I. 181).

These (especially a) would be plausible in Milton. Consulting Dr. Johnson's Dictionary, I have indeed found stresses assigned on *díversely* and *compénsate*. The only other deviations from Pope's metrical rules I have discovered so far are in "An Essay on Man":

5

a. Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things (I. 1)

5

b. Great Lord of all things, yet a prey to all (II. 16)

5

c. If white and black blend, soften and unite (II. 213)

St. John is possibly pronounced *Sinjon*. But most probably, these three lines suggest that we should not be surprised if we discover some further examples which eventually enable us to formulate an additional condition: A string of stresses may end in the *fifth (w)* position, provided it is followed by a marked rhetorical pause (this would, of course, coincide with the caesura).

The Diachronic Perspective

When we compare Pope's metrical style to Donne's or Milton's, significant differences are brought to attention. There arises the question of the general validity of generalizations. Can we say that all generalizations apply to all poets, or different sets of generalizations apply to different poets? The situation is further complicated by the recognition that such stylistic differences may characterize any two poets; or different artistic styles. Thus, for instance, Baroque and Romantic poets (Milton and Shelley, respectively), are more lenient in the application of rules (or, for that matter, have recourse to a set of less demanding rules) than Classicist poets (Pope, for instance). I suggest that the theoretical apparatus devised for the handling of differences between cultural periods can be adjusted to the handling of individual differences as well. Wellek and Warren distinguish three possible approaches to the literatures of the past: the relativist, the absolutist and the perspectivist approach. They suggest:

> In practice, such clear-cut choices between the historical and the present-day point of view are scarcely feasible. [...] The answer to historical relativism is not a doctrinaire absolutism which appeals to "unchanging human nature" or the "universality of art". We must rather adopt a view for which the term "perspectivism" seems suitable. We must be able to refer a work of art to the values of its own time and of all the periods subsequent to its own. [...] Relativism reduces the history of literature to a series of discrete and hence discontinuous fragments, while most absolutisms serve either only a passing present-day situation or are based [...] on some abstract non-literary ideal unjust to the historical variety of literature. "Perspectivism" means that we recognize that there is one poetry, one literature, comparable in all ages, developing, changing, full of possibilities (Wellek and Warren 1956: 31–32).

This applies, with the necessary changes, to the handling of metrical styles as well. The Halle-Keyser theory is a good example of an absolutistic approach. Poets and their readers from Chaucer to the present day have internalized a set of metric rules which are applicable to all of them. Some other generative metrists (Bruce Hayes, for instance) are "relativists" in this sense; they tend to "reduce the history of literature to a series of discrete and hence discontinuous fragments": in certain respects, Milton observes different rules from Shakespeare, for instance. The present work adopts a "perspectivist" approach: it uses a cognitive approach appealing to "unchanging human nature"—not to obscure differences, but to establish scales of markedness. These scales are based on mounting orders of cognitive complexity and governed by the law of "solidarity". Various style types or various individuals may draw their own utmost limit of acceptability at various points of each one of these scales. The older Shakespeare (in the seventeenth century) tended to draw the limit at

higher points than the younger Shakespeare (in the sixteenth century). And various readers may master in time, by training and experience, additional cognitive and vocal devices for the rhythmical performance of versification structures of increasing complexity.

Halle and Keyser explain the fact that the stress maxima theory can apply to the overwhelming majority of lines by poets from Chaucer to Yeats and after, by assuming that they all "internalized" this rule, whereas they, the theorists, have only explicitly formulated a rule intuitively followed by the poets. This "historical" model, however, cannot explain why poets like Donne, Shelley, Keats use constructions unacceptable to a poet like Pope. Keyser's answer is that Pope, too, followed the stress maxima rules, but took upon himself additional *stylistic* restrictions (oral communication). There is, however, no better evidence for this assumption than the *elegance* of the Halle-Keyser theory. It is very much like the uniforms of some armies with only one size of trousers, large enough for any soldier. If a slim soldier ties his trousers with a string in order not to lose them, it does not render them tailor-made.

The more "fluid" model of the Russian Formalists seems to suit much better the practice of poets (as well as the theory expounded here) than the "static" model of having "internalized" an unchanging "grammatical" rule. "Language must be 'deformed'. Novelty is the criterion, but novelty, we must remember, for the sake of disinterested perception of quality. [...] There is no aesthetic norm [...] for it is the essence of the aesthetic norm to be broken. No poetic style stays strange" (Wellek and Warren, 1956: 232). This conception applies to metrical rules no less than to other aspects of poetic language (e.g. metaphors): "As to the actual infringements of metrical laws, the discussion of such violations recalls Osip Brik, perhaps the keenest of Russian formalists, who used to say that political conspirators are tried and condemned only for unsuccessful attempts at a forcible upheaval, because in the successful coup it is the conspirators who assume the role of judges and prosecutors. If the violences against the meter take root, they themselves become metrical rules" (Jakobson, 1960: 364). Such a model has no difficulty in explaining the differences between the prosody of Pope and the prosody of Milton and Shelley. In fact, it is tailor-made for it; at any rate, more so—to mix up the metaphors hopelessly—than the elegant Halle-Keyser theory.

It might be protested that Shelley's deviations from Pope's prosody may be conceived of as the "deformation of language" for the sake of a fresh mode of perception; but there seems to be nothing particularly "fresh" in a regression from Milton's prosodic liberties to Pope's rule-abiding. One can perceive directly only actual deviations, but not rejected liberties-to-deviate. All the prosodic figures found in Pope are to be found in Milton too, and the absence of a figure cannot be directly perceived. This is true if one's approach to prosody is purely theoretical. If one also *listens* to poetry, one discovers a *perceptual contrast*, which can be accounted for in terms of witty/emotional, or in a more "publicly verifiable manner", in terms of

convergent/divergent,[4] or strong/weak Gestalt. Unfortunately, one cannot escape such "autobiographical fallacies". It would be all too easy to test a linguistic theory of metre against the verbal material of poems. But the issue is to propose a consistent theory *to account for what one hears*, then verify it against the verbal material of as many poems as possible, modify the theory accordingly and then check again whether it still corresponds to what one hears. The question is how to put as little personal bias into this check as possible. That this is difficult does not mean that it is more scientific not to attempt it.

The reluctance to resort to such subjective methods as *listening* to the music of poetry has led, in the case of generative metrics, to a model that cannot account for the occurrence of violations of its rules. This in turn may account, to some extent, for the curious fact that after several years of intensive investigations by rigorous scholars, the most obvious cases of stress maxima in weak positions had not been collected until my 1977 book.

In a cultural situation such as ours, in which we look back upon five hundred years or more of syllabotonic verse, one has to take a "flexible" attitude, that is—as it will be explained in Chapter 2—"readiness to assume a mental set voluntarily, to shift from one aspect of the situation to another, to keep in mind, simultaneously, various aspects[...]". Now, to appreciate the metre and rhythm of a rhythmically complex poem, one really needs to have such readiness at one's disposal. One has to keep in mind, simultaneously, the metric pattern *and* the actual stress pattern, and some neighbouring norms. In Shelley's "To a Skylark",

18. In profuse strains of unpremeditated art,

one must be aware of the metric pattern, *and* of the stress pattern which confirms it in only three out of six *s* positions and disconfirms it in the second and third positions, *and* of the fact that this line constitutes a shift in metric pattern after short trochaic lines; *and* of the fact that in this line syntax overrides caesura; *and* that not long before Shelley, *profuse strains* would have been metrically inadmissible. Or, to substitute a structural for a historical comparison, one must be aware that *profuse strains* presents greater structural tension than *of fused strains*. In brief, "in British parliamentary terms, it is not an opposition *to* its majesty the meter but an opposition *of* its majesty" (Jakobson, 1960: 364, my italics).

That is why the present theory can accept neither a rigidly "relativistic" conception of "metricalness" which draws the boundary for each poet or poetic style with no reference to other poets or poetic styles; nor a rigidly "absolutistic" conception, which assumes that all the poets have "internalized" the same set of rules; but rather a flexible, "perspectivistic" conception, which assumes some fluctuation of the boundary of "metricalness", but not a haphazard fluctuation. Notice that even where

[4] I cannot go here into the details of my conception of convergent and divergent poetry. I have elsewhere presented them in great detail: Tsur, 1972; 1977; 1992a. I will, however, dwell on convergent and divergent delivery styles in Chapter 3.

the present model most resembles the Halle-Keyser theory, there is a vital difference. Both theories claim a clear distinction between metric pattern and stress pattern. Unless I am mistaken, Halle and Keyser conceive of the relationship between the two patterns as of the relationship between deep structure and surface structure. All iambic verse is a realization of one deep structure or—more recently—of three deep structures (probably further modified by the number of available positions occupied by stress maxima, though this would involve some degree of overlapping, "stressed syllables occur only in *s* positions and in every *s* position" = "a stress maximum occurs in every *s* position"). The theory expounded here conceives of the two patterns rather as of the two terms of a metaphor, which in certain respects converge and in others diverge. Thus, for instance, the Halle-Keyser theory treats all the lines which have no stress maxima as equal; the present theory finds important differences between them. The Halle-Keyser theory reveals its interest in the two patterns only at points where they provide for ruling a line "unmetrical", or where it becomes necessary to substitute one "deep structure" for another; the present theory claims that an essential part of the process of performing a poem is to confront the two patterns constantly, and to register confirmations as well as tension, resulting from the disconfirmation of the metric pattern.

In explaining how *-fined* in a *w* position becomes "metrical" in

19. Supposed as forfeit to a confined doom

under the stress maxima theory, Halle and Keyser (1972a: 158n) remark: "The explanation given here obviates the need to suppose a special rule of stress shift in such phrases. Such stress shifts are rare in contemporary English and, indeed, their only justification is a theory of prosody which without recourse to stress shift would categorize lines containing such phrases as unmetrical. Since [our theory] obviates the need for this explanation, it also obviates the need for a rather dubious accent shift which must, in any case, be supposed to have come and then disappeared from language". Here too, however, Halle and Keyser retain their one-size-trousers approach: they do not account for the observational fact that the alleged stress shift seems to have come and then disappeared after Milton, and then reappeared after Pope; or, in metrical terms, that such constructions as in excerpt 19 were acceptable to Shakespeare and Milton, were unacceptable to Pope, and then, again, became acceptable to Shelley and Keats. Here an aesthetic conception of literary change seems inescapable. It seems that a theory of metre which—like the present one—capitalizes on discrepancies between metric pattern and stress pattern, may claim credit at least for acknowledging and explaining such historical changes. Furthermore, whatever the diachronic explanation, our main concern is synchronic: "How does the contemporary English reader handle such, and more 'deviant' cases?"

The appeal to Baroque, Classicist or Romantic aesthetics must not be regarded as transferring the mystery from one place to another. We know enough about these aesthetic conceptions from independent sources. Suffice it to mention that Pope's

observance of strict rules as well as Milton's and Shelley's inclination to apply rules more liberally are in perfect harmony with the aesthetic conceptions regularly associated with their respective general poetic styles.

Donne's Controlled "Carelessness"

Finally, two disconcerting questions must be faced. First, if the utmost limit of acceptability is determined by the reader's ability or willingness to cooperate, will any stretch of ten syllables do for an iambic pentameter verse line, if not, how can we know what stretches of ten syllables are unacceptable as iambic pentameter lines? This leads us to a second question: If we can show that the versification of a poet *is* careless, does this necessarily render him an incompetent poet?

Let us examine the first question not regarding just any stretch of language from, say, the morning newspapers, but in a poetic context. I have argued that the verse line does have a structure with significant perceptual dynamics. A verse line must be segmented into symmetrical or quasi-symmetrical halves; some strong positions are stronger than others, that is, may have greater grouping potential than others. Deviations in the lower ranks are better tolerated if the structures at the higher ranks are preserved. There are scales of unnaturalness; and although some readers are better equipped for performing higher degree infringements than others, there seem to be certain structures that clearly exceed the competence of most or all competent readers. We know for sure that certain geological configurations are mountains, and that others are hills, even though we cannot tell where the exact boundary between them is drawn. Similarly, we know that certain versification configurations are well within the competence of most or all competent readers of poetry, some clearly exceed it, even though we cannot tell where is the exact boundary between them.

We have examined one hundred lines by each one of five poets. We have found that the most regular poet of the corpus (Spenser) had 121 deviances per one hundred lines, that is, per one thousand positions; the most deviant one (Shelley) had 187 deviances. In other words, the difference between them was 66 deviances per thousand positions. The difference between Pope, the "prototypical" regular poet, and Milton, the "prototypical" deviant poet, was only 24 deviances. This quantitative difference is reinforced by qualitative differences: the greater the *number* of deviances, the greater the *proportion* of the marked forms of deviances.

In the first one hundred lines of Donne's *Satyre II,* by contrast, there are 292 deviances, over one hundred more than in Shelley. This is the only poem in our sample in which less than ninety of the tenth positions (89) are occupied by stressed syllables, and only seventy-four of the fourth positions (in Shelley, the respective occupancies are 93 and 78). The greatest number of stress maxima in weak positions in a single work I have found in *Paradise Regained:* 18 (per 2070 lines). Twelve or thirteen of them occur in the seventh position, one (or nought) in the fifth, the rest in the third. In Donne's *Holy Sonnets* there are six or seven, four of which occur in

the seventh position, the rest in the third. In *Satyre II* (112 lines), there are no less than five sure cases of stress maxima in weak positions, and two more disputable cases, only one of which occurs in the seventh position, one in the fifth, the rest in the third. One of Donne's most effective means of obscuring metre is by using an exceptionally high number of bisyllabic occupancy of metrical positions. But in this, in *Satyre II* at least, he meticulously adheres to the conditions laid down by Halle and Keyser (see Chapter 8). In addition to this, the structure of Donne's sentences is excessively laboured so as to take up mental space otherwise required for the rhythmic processing of the lines. There is no possibility of carrying in the short term memory both syntactic and metrical units at the same time; sometimes not even the syntactic units alone. This rhythmic harshness is further coupled with harsh diction. It would not be a too gross exaggeration to suggest that Donne's deviance, both quantitatively and qualitatively, exceeds in this *Satyre* that theoretically undefined point that marks the reader's utmost readiness or ability to perform these verse lines rhythmically—even though all but five (or seven) lines of the *Satyre* are "metrical" under the Halle-Keyser theory. Milton and Shelley push metric deviance to the brink of chaos to secure the greatest musicality; Donne, in his Satyres goes beyond it. This answers the first question.

As for the second question, does this render Donne an incompetent poet? Not necessarily. Some critics will go a long way *to find some artistic purpose* in, for instance, Donne's "harsh diction and faulty metre". In a very illuminating paper comparing metrical styles in Donne's *Satyres* and Pope's "reversification" of them, Chatman comments:

> Donne's tone, in short, seems to say: "Look, I have no time to be bothered with carefully measuring words and sounds. I take them as they come to me in my divine and angry inspiration. My anger is righteous and sincere, and if I stop to tamper with it, to dissect and to analyze it and put it into *bon mots*, it will cool into ineffectuality" (1960: 172).

Convincing as this interpretation may sound, there is one difficulty with it, which I shall briefly indicate, but will not pursue at any length. The blurred metrical shapes of Milton, Shelley, and Donne's own *Holy Sonnets* lend enormous emotive force to their "divine and angry inspirations", which the total elimination of these blurred shapes does not. In this respect, the way of Milton, Shelley and the *Holy Sonnets* is far more "effectual", to say the least. Arguments such as Chatman's are brought *ad absurdum* in Dürenmatt's play *Portrait of a Planet*, by a painter who, in his search for an adequate expression of the emptiness and meaninglessness of the universe, passed from landscape painting to geometrical abstracts; then came to the conclusion that a white sheet in a frame is better suited for the expression of this emptiness. When he began to exhibit empty frames—so expressive of the emptiness of human life—people stopped buying his pictures. Finally, when he did away with the frames too and painted landscapes without paint or brush on invisible sheets,

only the doctor of the asylum would sometimes stop by and pretend to admire his work. I do not wish to imply by this that Donne's "faulty metres" may have no "artistic purpose", but that if they have, a better explanation must be found. Since any feature of a work of art can be justified on such "expressive" grounds, a boring work expresses the poet's boredom, and so on, there arises the notorious question: how can we know sheer "carelessness and negligence" from "a diligent kind of negligence" and "controlled carelessness"? Let me say at once that I do not know what the artistic purpose of Donne's careless metrical style is. Perhaps it is rather "purposiveness without purpose", in Kant's phrase. Moreover, if there *is* a tone of purposiveness in faulty metres, what are its exponents? I suggest that in Donne's *Satyres* excessive irregularities, ambiguous shaping and laboured syntax may count toward "goodness", *if* all of them contribute to an overall, definite character of harshness.

Donne seems deliberately to burden the reader's memory with highly laboured sentences; as a result, no mental space is available for the rhythmic processing of the verse. His elaborate sentences frequently have the syntactic structures that are given by recent syntactic studies as examples of well-formed sentences that may exceed the limit set by the reader's memory, and become barely intelligible for sheer length. In excerpt 20, such a structure is extended until it becomes excessively laboured. Compare the following passage from Donne's *Satyre II* to Pope's "reversification" of it:

20. One, (like a wretch, which at Barre judg'd as dead,
Yet prompts him which stands next, and cannot reade,
And saves his life) gives ideot actors meanes
(Starving himselfe) to live by his labor'd sceanes (Donne, 11–14).

21. Here a lean Bard, whose wit could never give
Himself a dinner, makes an Actor live:
The Thief condemn'd, in law already dead,
So prompts and saves a Rogue who cannot read (Pope).

The *number* of Donne's metric deviations is not excessive in these two couplets. Lines 11 and 14 begin with stress valleys that would be perfectly regular in Pope too. But the first one must be operated across a major syntactic boundary (parenthesis). Nor would the four infringements in midline (per four lines) seem excessive. But three of them, at least, bear some markedness. It is "$\underset{w}{\text{stánds}}$ $\underset{s}{\text{néxt}}$" that comes nearest to Pope's only infringement of metre ("$\underset{w}{\text{léan}}$ $\underset{s}{\text{bárd}}$"): a headword with its respective modifier or qualifier. "$\underset{w}{\text{Gíves}}$ $\underset{s}{\text{íd}}\underset{w}{\text{eot}}$" arouses some "micro-tension". Metrically, the two words are to be grouped together; syntactically, the phrases bracketed together *(ideot actors)* and *(gives means)* are more closely related than "gives ideot"; their clustering, likely to be indicated by marking off the enclosed from the enclosing phrase, runs counter to metric grouping. The same dynamism is amplified in

"Bárre júdg'd". The two are metrically grouped together, for compensation, but separated by the boundary following "Barre", which is part of a dislocated prepositional phrase. The fourth deviance results in a displaced stress in the "sensitive second foot". At first sight, one is inclined to scan line 12 as "Yét prómpts him"; this would agree both with metric pattern and ordinary usage of syntax. Accordingly, the next, rankshifted clause, "which stands next", would refer to the one who "prompts" and so "saves his (the wretch's) life". However, "and cannot reade" seems to be conjoined with "stands next", and so "which stands next" is unlikely to prompt, but is himself in need of help.[5] This obscurity is finally cleaned up by analogy with the actor image: it is the "wretch" that prompts the one who stands next; and line 12 will read:

22. Yet prómpts hím that stánds néxt, and cannot réade
w s w s w s w s w s

The metre of the passage is further obscured by the assignment of two syllables, "by his", to a single position (though observing the Halle-Keyser rules, see Chapter 8), in line 14. Now, it should be noticed that some of these marked figures could occur, if the rest of the metric context is strong enough, even in Pope; or all of them together, within a passage of four lines, in Milton. Such a Miltonic passage might be perceived as musical, though it would require plenty of rhythmical processing. Donne's passage sounds so harsh, because most of the mental space required for its rhythmical processing is taken up by syntactic and tropic processing. The main sentence of the passage would sound as follows: "One gives ideot actors means (starving himself) to live by his labor'd sceanes". A more natural order would be achieved if the parenthesis were inserted, e.g., after the first NP: "One, starving himself, gives...". As if one such parenthesis were not strained enough, another parenthesis, more than two lines long, is inserted, and in such a way so as to constitute the greatest possible disturbance. In the first place, it introduces a completely new image, rather obscure, with its allusion to contemporary legal practice. Pope, quite appropriately, removes one image from within the other, and presents them consecutively. This renders the articulation of his ideas clearer.

In the second place, Donne's first parenthesis segregates the subject of the frame sentence, the exponent of which is a monosyllabic indefinite pronoun. As such, the only "information" it is capable of giving is that the utterance is extremely strained. If one may say so, the speaker's "second thoughts" are interpolated before the least bit of his "first thoughts" is revealed. Ostensibly, then, this structure seems to have no other function than to render the utterance as laboured as possible. Moreover, it should be noticed that "One" arouses syntactic expectations and, occupying a weak

[5] In Donne's time, a convicted felon who could read could claim "benefit of clergy" and would not be hanged, as Donne's audience would have known. So, one's life could be saved at a reading test by "prompting" from the person standing next.

position, expectations of the reinstatement of metre; the parenthesis interferes with the fulfilment of both. So, memory is burdened with *different kinds* of expectations, which also diverge in duration.

Furthermore, the syntactic processing of the utterance within the parenthesis is further burdened by a favourite device of Donne's; in fact, the same obscuring device is twice deployed. (a) The relative pronoun "which" occurs twice within the same sentence, in clauses of different ranks, and referring to different persons; (b) the recursive branching is obscured, the conjunction "and" occurs twice in close proximity, conjoining VPs; the two conjunctions operate at different ranks, and the constituents conjoined at the lower rank ("stands next, and cannot reade") are inserted between the constituents conjoined at the higher rank ("prompts. . . and serves").

What makes, then, Donne's carelessness seem so "controlled" is that the *Satyres* leave no room for uncertainty in respect of their rhythmical quality. The reader is not encouraged to believe that the poet may have aimed at, and failed to achieve, *some* degree of euphony. The poem persistently eliminates, by all the metrical and syntactical means available, the possibility of any euphonic organization.[6] The poem has an atmosphere of "purposeful carelessness", because the reader remains with no doubts or uncertainties as to the poem's harshness; there is a great variety of means that act "in harmony" with this "aim"; and this, in spite of the fact that in, e.g., the 112 lines of the *Satyre II*, all but five (or seven) lines are "metrical" under the Halle-Keyser theory.[7]

In this section I have pointed out two important features in Donne's versification. First, if the verse of Spenser, Thomson, Pope, Milton, and Shelley is within the scope of the reader's capability of performing it rhythmically, the difference in regularity between Donne's and the most divergent poet's verse is considerably greater (both in quantity and in quality) than that between the most and least divergent poets of the corpus. This places Donne, presumably, beyond the theoretically undefined utmost limit of rhythmicalness. Second, this does not necessarily render his versification incompetent. Donne's excessive metric irregularities, ambiguous shaping and laboured syntax may count toward "goodness", because they all contribute to an overall, definite character of harshness. Thus Donne's versification arouses the impression of deliberate, even controlled harshness that can be described, in Kant's phrase, as "purposiveness without purpose".

6 This notion is analogous, in an important respect, to Atistotle's conception of consistency in character: "Though the subject of imitation, who suggested the type, be inconsistent, still he must be consistently inconsistent" *(Poetics,* XV, 4). I am grateful to Prof. Anthony Nuttal for drawing my attention to this similarity.

7 I have elsewhere elaborated at greater length on this comparison between Donne's *Satyres* and Pope's "reversification", and on other issues related to appreciation (Tsur, 1977: 215–238).

To Conclude

I have treated the verse line as a system that determines the character of its parts. As long as "the whole" is preserved in perception, deviations at the lower ranks are acceptable, even perceived as increasing the line's musicality. Preservation of the whole in perception depends, to a considerable extent, on performance. The conception of "allowable deviations" is clearly untenable. But I am also quite sceptical regarding the "rule-internalization" conception of metricality. A weight-lifter need not internalize rules for "liftability"; if a certain weight exceeds his strength, he simply cannot lift it. By training he may move the utmost limit of "liftability" further away. The same seems to hold true of the utmost limit of "metricality". What readers *may* internalize are devices for the accommodation of the conflicting patterns of stress and metre (training). But even in this respect, I would grant the reader considerable creativity: for unforeseen instances he may invent new devices. The constraints on such inventiveness are the linguistic and metrical structure of the verse instance on the one hand, and such psychological constraints as the limitations of short-term memory and the Gestalt rules of perception on the other. The store of such internalized devices along with the ability to invent new devices constitute the reader's "rhythmic competence". The various devices can be arranged on scales of markedness, according to the relative difficulty of their application. The higher the device on the scale, the greater the tension generated by the verse line that requires its application. On this view, the readers of Pope and Milton have not internalized different rules of metricality, but rather draw the utmost limit of metricality at different points on the same scales of markedness. The ensuing chapters will be devoted to the exploration of these issues.