

Transcendental Techniques in Robert Lowell 's Poetry

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Abstract

This article draws Robert Lowell's poetry, to be writing in the "Techniques" wide and deep inside the wake of American Transcendentalism, which, in some degree, Could slacken the ruthlessness of the unflinching reality, or provide an imaginative power to face it. Essential to any study of Robert Lowell's prosody is a close analysis of his stable line-iambic pentameter, the peculiar technical genius of linguistics.

Keywords: Transcendental Techniques, Robert Lowell 's Poetry

The article draws the quality of style and the quality of poetry in 'techniques' established by Robert Lowell's poetry. The prosodist finds himself choosing between atleast two fundamental approaches, the temporal and the traditional and further, he has to decide between two different systems of notation used to record the line of verse, the two stress levels of the traditional and the four stress levels of the linguistics.

The prosodist is concerned with verse, which comes from the Latin versus, Harold Whitehall, in from linguistics to criticism says "a turning around as of the plough at the end of the furrow, and thus it meant also a furo, a row, a line of writing" (418). The physical basis of this line of verse is a syllable, to which the linguistics have given the operational definition the domain of any stress level. As such, it may contain a single vowel, a diphthong, or either one of these, together with surrounding constants. In Christmas Eve in the Time of War, he begins with the contrast "Tonight a blackout...Twenty years ago/ I strung my stocking on the tree" (1-2); he uses the past here to emphasize the horror of the present. In Home Coming, "when he realizes that the boys in his old gang" (2) are "bald like baby birds," (4) he mourns his lost youth of life studies, Marjorie Perl off has written that "the typical begins in a moment of crisis in the present, and then returns to the present with renewed insight" (106); and what is true of Life Studies is true of Lowell's whole career. According to their different approaches to the syllable, and since the syllable is the basis of the line of poetry. The discussion of English meter has been dominated by two theories of metrics which are divided over just what type of measure determines the line. Paul Baum in the principles of English Versification says:

"Probably the most disputed point in all prosaic theory is the relative importance of time (duration) syllabic length, and stress (accent) in English verse. Some writers have attempted to explain all the phenomena entirely by stress: others entirely by time" (4). While in Cistercian in Germany is a greater. "Here/puppets have heard the civil words of Darwin/clang, clang, and while the divine of screen and air" (22-24). In the Crucifix "there are also numerous examples of winter's conception of syllabic sprung-rhythm "How dry time screams in its fat axle-grease..." (1). The first four syllables of this line might possibly be scanned into an iambic movement but the slight difference between the stresses, if there is an audible difference, doesn't lend itself to any such distinction much of the stress ambiguity that results from Ionics and syllabic sprung-rhythm is the result of the tendency in Lowell to compound.

The conjunction of the anapestic and trochaic substitution coupled with Ionics and jam me, stresses from "Lord Wear's Castle produce line in The Quaker Graveyard in Nantucket which do not seem even faintly iambic:

When the Whale's viscera go and the roll
Of its corruption over runs this world
Beyond tree-swept Nantucket and woods Hole
And Maratha's vine yard, sailor, will you sword
Whistle and fall and sink into the fat?
In the great ash-pit of Jehoshaphat

The bones cry for the blood of the white whale
The fat -flukes arch and whack about its ears,
The death-lance churns into the sanctuary, tears
The gun-blue swindle, hearing like a flail,
And hacks and coiling life out: it works and rags
And rips the sperm-whale's midriff into rags
Gobbets of blubber spill to wind and weather,
Sailor, and gulls go round the stoves timber
Where the morning stars sing out together
And thunder shakes the white surf and dismembers
 The red flag hammered in the mast- head
Hide, out steel, Jonas Messiahs, in Thy side. (89-106)

Here the intensification of trochaic and anapestic substitution, and the use of the word's "vineyard", "sailor", "coiling", "blubber", "heaving", "morning", "thunder" and "hammered" even when they are not scanned as troches inside the line- temporarily create a trochaic rhythm. The entire passage answers to Gerard Manley Hopkins' description of counterpoint rhythm in poems and prose:

"If, however, the reversal is repeated in two feet running, especially so as to include the sensitive second foot, it must be due either to great want of ear or else a calculated effect, the super inducing or mounting of a new rhythm upon the old; and since the new or mounted rhythm is actually heard and at the same time the mind naturally supplies the natural or standard forgoing rhythm...two rhythms are some manner running at once and we have something unanswerable to counterpoint in music, which is two or more strains of tune going on together, and this is counterpoint rhythm"(8).

We can locate clear, coherent, valid principles at the center of his art, all efforts to speak of Lowell in the usual ways discussions on his alienation from the society, dynamic ambivalence, apostate, Calvinism literary inheritance, discovery of "confessionals".

If in many poems of *For the Union Dead*, Lowell, under and extreme emotional pressure, failed to transform his despair, futility and guilt into art, Lowell's adoption of trimeter or tetrameter couplet in *Near the Ocean* was an effort to sort his open spiritually and artistically helpless self by trying to find an appropriate form in the prearranged poetic traditions. This conflict was deepened when Lowell decided to adopt the fourteen-line "sonnet" form as the container of "History", (9). The total past in the present the largest part of history, his flashbacks to his response to the times. Proving's cantos and Berryman's *Dream song* provided. Models for an epic mission to express all the live experience into an artistic form, in some degree, the fourteen-line form gave him a freer rhythm, a more open flow of associations, and a technique of sudden alternations in tone and observations. But in the poems written in the form, there was too often the feeling of formal monotony, rhythmic inertia, a tired mechanical repetitiveness, which was a define emblem of the poet's emotional drainage.

Two Notebooks editions, *History* and *The Dolphin* lacked a real voice, with the absence of the poet's emotional drainage. Two Notebooks editions *History* and *The Dolphin* lacked a real voice with this form, became predictable as though its tone and rhythm were baffled and exhausted. Lowell here proves how he is a poet of "happenings". Lowell is still concerned with the enervation and brutality of the present state of man and can speak in his former loud, intricate, and rhetorical voice in *Children of Light* "our feathers wrung their bread from stocks and stones/And fenced their gardens with the Redman's bones;/Embarking from the Netherland of Holland..."(1-3).

Theoretically, the line of iambic pentameter may have a break after any syllable, or may be without one altogether; practically, both Lowell and Milton make use of every one of these possibilities in *Lord Wear's Castle* of the poem *The Quaker Graveyard*;

After the first syllable:

 Now, and the world shall come to Willingham (126)

After the second syllable:

 Sailors, who pitch this portent at the sea (17)

After the third syllable:

 Off soonest, where the yawing s-boats splash (33)

After the fourth syllable:

In this street scales: ask for no orpheanlute (23)

After the fifth syllable:

The pound's sea wings, beating landward, fall (31).

After the sixth syllable:

The blocks: off mandrake, where lubbers lash (36).

After the seventh syllable:

On Ahab's void and forehead; and the name (15).

After the eighth syllable:

In the mad scramble of their lives. They died (57).

After the ninth syllable:

When the drowned sailor clutched the drag-net light (4).

After the tenth syllable:

Had steamed into our worth Atlantic Fleet (3).

No break

Cry out in the night for the hurt beast... (43).

Also, in theory, we might expect to find up to ten breaks in any single line, but in this poem, there are seldom more than two, a principle that Lowell -nor Milton - rarely violates in any line of his poetry. The large rhythmic outline and the intricate inner-movement of this stanza is controlled by pauses. Grammatical pauses interrupt the metric rhythm and are used for the sake of sense or to separate the different and varying sections of the speech rhythm. These may be syntactical or rhetorical and they correspond to the ends of sentences, clauses, and phrases; they are usually indicated by varying means of punctuation.

The second type of pause refers to breaks in the speech rhythms and may occur either at the line divisions or in the middle of lines to balance groups of vowel and consonants sounds; essential to any study of Robert Lowell's prosody is a close analysis of his stable line-iambic pentameter. Even though there are many irregularly structured poems in all of the first three volumes of his poetry, the iambic line remains a norm from which Lowell departs only to return again. The peculiar technical genius of Lowell lies in the way he avoids any monotonous iambic movement within this rather strict limitation, he has set for himself. The use to which Lowell puts this allowed exception, allows him to work within the limit of an iambic line yet effect a variety of statements.

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