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A Reading in Temporal Poetics

Elizabeth Bishop's "The Map"

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ABSTRACT: Poetry is formal. It selects and patterns forms that are analogically related. Form is closely related to rhythm. Rhythm is componential. Form is paradigmatic. The qualities of the rhythmic components are the source of formal paradigms. Rhythm creates (subjective) time. Therefore, a poetics based on rhythm is a temporal poetics. This essay reads Elizabeth Bishop's "The Map" from the viewpoint of just such a temporal poetics.

KEYWORDS: rhythm, form, temporality, temporal poetics, poetry, Elizabeth Bishop

The weaknesses in *prosody* (in the sense of our theories of poetic rhythm) and *poetics* (in the sense of our theories of poetry) are closely related. As Charles Bernstein and others have lamented, the great lacunae in poetics have been (a) a table of possible poetic forms and (b) a combinatorial logic that can specify how these poetic forms are selected and combined by poets into novel, yet coherent, complexes (Bernstein 10–11). In most poetic theory and criticism, form imitates meaning, is some sort of implied meaning, or is some sort of organizer of meaning. But as Bernstein and others have rightly argued, the very nature of the poem is to reverse these form-meaning relations. In the poem, meaning serves form. The problem of poetic form is a very difficult one, however, and has never really been solved—and for good reason. While we know quite a bit about various individual aspects of poetic form, up to this point at least, we have known next to nothing about (a) the internal organization of any given system of forms, or (b) how a form from one formal system relates to a form from some other

formal system. That is, confronted with a poem, we have had almost no idea of what goes with what. Questions that probe our knowledge of these formal correspondences have always seemed wildly mysterious, if not totally unanswerable, even though such gestures are the very stuff from which all poetry is made. What type of sentence goes with images of spring and earth? What sound-scheme goes with the past tense? What intonation goes with nouns? What trope goes with deductive argument? What word class goes with questions? And so forth.

Similarly, the prosodic tradition has always been primarily interested in the voice, how it moves rhythmically from syllable to syllable, stress to stress. But for whatever reason, this tradition has always given vocal movement a very regular, one-dimensional, and minimal representation (e.g., poetic feet, with foot substitution), while claiming that all more regular movement is just an abstract norm of this vocal movement and all less regular movement is not rhythmic at all. This conception of rhythm can be useful for certain basic critical tasks, but is much too narrow and misleading to be of further theoretical or practical use. Actually, the movement of the voice (what linguists and music theorists call *rhythmic grouping*) is not at all one-dimensional, regular, and minimal but multileveled, variable, and complex. Similarly, the simpler and more regular movement that often accompanies the poetic voice (what music theorists would call *meter*) is not at all abstract and normative of the voice but gestural and cyclical, a felt pulsation that winds down in relatively fixed, alternating patterns that are directly *opposed* to the normative contours of the voice. All complex rhythms have more volatile *linear* and *nonlinear* components, too, what music theorists call *prolongation* and *theme*, respectively. This critique of the prosodic tradition leads to a new conceptual framework for the study of poetic rhythm, a new definition of poetic rhythm. In the prosodic tradition, rhythm is a simplified tracking of the regular motion of the voice, and everything else is collapsed into this one thing (or neglected entirely). The implicit claim is that rhythm has some sort of unified temporal logic (i.e., isochronous repetition, iambic feet, or whatever) and everything else is a kind of significant/negligible variation from this temporal norm. Therefore, a poem's rhythm can be fully described by specifying (or assuming) this temporal norm and then cataloguing the deviations from it, whenever and wherever they might occur.

However, as it turns out, rhythm (and therefore the subjective time that it constructs) is not homogeneous and logically unified. It is multiple, divided, and dialectically conflicted. Rhythm is not one thing but four very different things in inherently tense, complementary interaction. I like to call these four different things the major *components* of rhythm. Each of these major rhythmic components creates a different sort of subjective time. Meter creates *cyclical time*, which is associated with sensation, perception, and physical ecstasy. Rhythmic grouping creates *centroidal time*, which is associated with the centered self and emotional expression. Prolongation creates *linear time*, which is associated with volition and action. And theme creates *relative time*, which is associated with thought, imagination, and memory. In this approach to prosody, rhythm is not just the regular movement of the voice but the concerted and conflicted movements of our major psychological faculties—sensation, emotion, volition, and thought; body, soul, will, and mind.

These four rhythmic components are elegantly oppositional and/or complementary, so much so that their rhythmic qualities form a tight paradigmatic system. For instance, within these parameters, meter is subjective, iconic, and local; favors similar events and repetitive patterns; places its most prominent events initially; is fixed and falling, passive and retrospective, and encourages participation (and therefore builds social community). On the other hand, rhythmic grouping is more objective, global, and volatile; favors local emblematic differences (against a strong background of similarity); is strongly hierarchical and proportional; centers its prominences and therefore rises and falls; focuses on present time; and encourages analogical correspondences and reciprocal obligation. The other rhythmic components extend and complete these paradigmatic relations in similar ways. These oppositional/complementary rhythmic qualities can be gathered together and organized into a table, what I like to call the *temporal paradigm*.

The Temporal Paradigm

Temporal	Cyclical	Centroidal	Linear	Relative
Features				
event-event relation	similarity	difference- in-similarity	similarity- in-difference	difference

Temporal

Features	Cyclical	Centroidal	Linear	Relative
temporal figure	occurrence repetition succession	correspondence prominence proportion	transition direction implication	connection distinction simultaneity
subject-subject relation	participation	obligation	cooperation	individuality
subject-event relation	subjective	objective-in subjective	subjective-in objective	objective
semiotic relation	icon	emblem	index	symbol
cognitive process	reaction passive	affection reciprocal	exploration active	creation improvisatory
clock time: orientation	past	present	future	relative
relational scope	proximate	local	regional	global
event position	initial	medial	final	peripheral
curve of energy	fall	rise-fall	fall-rise	rise
structural volatility	fixed	constrained	volatile	free

The temporal paradigm is especially productive as a detailed key to formal correspondences among the diverse linguistic materials of the poem—grammatical, rhetorical, semantic, thematic, generic, and so forth. As Northrop Frye suggested long ago, there are really four major literary genres (song/epos, lyric, prose fiction, and drama) and these might be best characterized in rhythmic terms. As Hayden White has suggested, these generic textures also correlate closely with the four master tropes (metaphor, synecdoche, metonymy, and irony) and the four major modes of emplotment (romance, comedy, tragedy, and satire).

Linguists with a strong analogical bent, such as Kenneth Pike, have argued that grammatical form falls into homologously quadratic paradigms. And many, including Frye, have noticed the quadratic organization of major complexes of archetypal images in poetry—the four seasons of the year, the four major directions of the compass, the four elements, and so forth. Indeed, these insights into the quadratic organization of our sensibilities, the world, and their interaction go back to Pythagorus and, as Jung explored so thoroughly, might have been most highly developed in medieval alchemy. Over the years, I have gathered the correlations between the temporal paradigm, poetic language, and poetic contexts into what I call the *poetic paradigm*.

THE POETIC PARADIGM

Temporality	Cyclical	Centroidal	Linear	Relational
<i>I. Psychological and Neurological</i>				
sociobiology	colonial invertebrate	social insect	higher mammal	human
neurology	hind/reptilian brain	mid/mammalian brain	left cortex	right cortex
faculty	perception/body	feeling/emotion	will/action	memory/thought
sense	touch	smell/taste	hearing	sight
vision	primal sketch	full sketch	2 1/2 D	3-d
phylogeny	australopithicus	homo habilis	homo erectus	homo sapiens
ecology	mineral	vegetable	animal	human
ontogeny	child	youth	adult	elder
psycho-pathology	manic-depressive	psychosis	neurosis	amnesia
<i>II. Historical and Cultural</i>				
Western culture	Ancient	Medieval/Renaissance	19th Century	Modern
	-1100	1100-1750	1750-1900	1900-
philosophy	formism	organicism	mechanism	contextualism
economy	hunting/gathering	agriculture	industry	information

religion	polytheism	monotheism	naturalism	humanism
social economy	tribalism	feudalism	capitalism	socialism
settlement	city	state	nation	world
social status	family/kinship	estate/peer	class/citizen	comrade
writing	orality	chirography	typography	cybernetics
logic	conduction	deduction	induction	abduction
temporality	past/traditional	present/apocalyptic	future/utopian	relative/pragmatic
government	monarchy	aristocracy	republic	democracy
spatial art	sculpture	architecture	painting	photography
temporal art	dance	music	literature	film
social ethic	communal fate	personal duty	social progress	individual rights
personal ethic 4	wisdom	faith	intelligence	creativity
3	justice	obedience	responsibility	spontaneity
2	temperance	charity	self-reliance	tolerance
1	courage	purity	self-control	flexibility

III. Literary and Rhetorical

genre	epic	lyric	narrative	dramatic
work	song	poem	prose fiction	play
reader position	language	character	audience	author
creative process	dictation	revelation	discovery	creation
trope	metaphor	synecdoche	metonymy	irony
sound scheme	alliteration	assonance & rhyme	consonance	pararhyme
grouping	fall	rise-fall	fall-rise	rise
meter	tetrameter	pentameter	variable	free
divisioning	stanzaic	paragraphed	chaptered	arranged
prolongation	extensional	chiastic	anticipatory	fragmentary
syntactic scheme	anaphora	antistrophe	epistrophe	symploce
discourse	paratactic	logical	temporal	dialectical
semiotic relation	iconic	emblematic	indexical	symbolic
structure	repetition	pattern	process	network
position	initial	medial	final	peripheral
figuration	opposition	unity	uncertainty	multeity

	contrast	resolution	ambiguity	difference
pattern	concentric	geometrical	asymmetrical	multi-dimensional
process	repetitive	contoured	dynamic	static
	proleptic	climactic	anticipatory	anti-climactic
	contradictory	closed	blurred	open
	fixed	shaped	directed	undirected

IV. Prosodic and Syntactic

level	paralanguage	prosody	syntax	semantics
word stress	weak	tertiary	secondary	primary
prosodic foot	moraic foot	syllabic foot	dipodic foot	word
prosodic hierarchy	clitic phrase	phonological phrase	tone unit	utterance unit
syllable	onset	rhyme	nucleus	coda
intonation	fall	rise-fall	fall-rise	rise
syntactic level	word	phrase	clause	sentence
sentence relations	complexing	rank shift	cohesion	transformation
cohesion	repetition	substitution	pronominalization	ellipsis
rank shift	compounding	incorporation	subordination	parenthesis
case	subjective	genitive	objective	[oblique]
sentence types	simple	compound	complex	compound-complex
sentence types	declarative	exclamative	imperative	interrogative
transformation	preposing	postposing	discontinuity	fragmentation
speech acts	statement	exclamation	command	question
complexing	apposition	conjunction	correlation	comment
clause constituency	subjectivization	predication	transitivity	qualification
clause constituents	subject	predicator	complement	adverbial
clause pattern	intransitive	copular	transitive	adverbial
transitivity	monotransitive	complex-transitive	ditransitive	adverbial
mood	indicative	subjunctive	imperative	infinitive
adverbial	adjunct	subjunct	conjunct	disjunct
phrase structure	head	modifier	complement	specifier
word class	noun	adjective	verb	adverbial

phrase type	noun	adjective	verb	adverb/prep
verbal functions	voice	aspect	modality	tense
voice	passive	middle	active	causative
aspect	perfective	imperfective	progressive	perfect
tense	past	present	future	relative
modality	necessity	obligation	probability	possibility
word formation	compounding	derivation	inflection	conversion
function words	conjunction	interjection	pronoun	specifier
conjunction	coordinating	subordinating	correlative	comparative
reference	generic	specific	definite	proper
person	3rd	1st	2nd	generic
number	generic	singular	plural	mass

V. Semantic and Thematic

archetypal	earth	sun	stars	moon
themes/images	spring	summer	autumn	winter
	earth	water	air/wind	fire
	morning	noon	evening	night
	child	youth	adult	elder
	spring	brook/stream	river	ocean/lake
	heaven	Eden	purgatory	hell
	white	green/yellow	red/brown	black/blue
	mineral	vegetable	animal	mental/virtual
	east	south	west	north
	sunrise	day(light)	sunset/dsuk	dark
	gut	heart	hand/foot/arm	head
	seed/bud	flower/leaf	fruit	branch
	dew	rain	clouds	snow
	asexual	homosexual	heterosexual	bisexual
	one	two	three	four
	quantity	quality	relation	manner
	body	feeling/soul	action/will	memory/thought
	touch	taste/smell	hearing	sight

with	from	into	away
gold	silver	bronze	iron/lead
awaken	daydream	doze	sleep/dream
mother	son	father	daughter
gluttony	lust	sloth/greed/anger/pride	envy
foundation	walls/roof	door	window
kitchen	dining room	living room	bedroom
pig/bear	dog/lion	horse	bird/cat
maze	circle	line	spiral
God	Christ/Son	Holy Ghost	Anti-Christ/Satan
King/President	church	legislature	courts
body/child	garden/farm/house	city	mind/personality/art
athlete/general	saint/priest	ruler/senator/judge	artist/performer
beginnings	middles	ends	peripheries
wall	steeple	room	tower
cell	tissue	organ	system
stone	wood	steel	plastic
mountain	valley	plain/moor	forest/woods
grass	flower	bush/hedge	tree

The most significant claim of my temporal poetics is that the temporal and poetic paradigms now fill these lacunae in poetics. These paradigms give us both a table of possible forms used in poetry (the poetic paradigm) and the logic that motivates how these forms are selected and combined by poets in their writing of poems (the temporal paradigm). This combinatorial logic tells us both the (relevant) internal organization of each separate system of forms and what goes with what, when forms from different systems are combined.

With the temporal and poetic paradigms in hand, our seemingly mysterious, or even unanswerable, questions about formal correspondences are now easily answered. Simple sentences go with images of spring and earth. Alliteration goes with the past tense. Falling intonation goes with nouns. Synecdoche goes with deductive argument. And adverbs go with questions.

This “temporal poetics” produces detailed, insightful poetic readings. For instance, consider the following:

The Map

- 1 Land lies in water; it is shadowed green.
- 2 Shadows, or are they shallows, at its edges
- 3 showing the line of long sea-weeded ledges
- 4 where weeds hang to the simple blue from green.
- 5 Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under,
- 6 drawing it unperturbed around itself?
- 7 Along the fine tan sandy shape
- 8 is the land tugging at the sea from under?

- 9 The shadow of Newfoundland lies flat and still.
- 10 Labrador’s yellow, where the moony Eskimo
- 11 has oiled it. We can stroke these lovely bays,
- 12 under a glass as if they were expected to blossom,
- 13 or as if to provide a clean edge for invisible fish.
- 14 The names of the seashore towns run out to sea,
- 15 the names of cities across the neighboring mountains
- 16 —the printer here experiencing the same excitement
- 17 as when emotion too far exceeds its cause.
- 18 These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger
- 19 like women feeling for the smoothness of yard goods.

- 20 Mapped waters are more quiet than the land is,
- 21 lending the land their waves’ own confirmation;
- 22 And Norway’s hare runs south in agitation,
- 23 profiles investigate the sea, where land is.
- 24 Are they assigned or can the countries pick their colors?
- 25 —What suits the character or the native waters best.
- 26 Topography displays no favorites; North’s as near as West.
- 27 More delicate than the historians’ are the map-maker’s colors.

—Elizabeth Bishop (3)

"The Map," published in 1935 when she was only 24 years old, is Elizabeth Bishop's first mature poem. Nonetheless, even at this beginning point of her career, it harbingers many of the materials and techniques of the poetry that she would write for the next half century: a preoccupation with travel, a love of the sea and shorelines, an interest in geography and topography as poetic material, an attraction to objectivism as an aesthetic strategy, a blending of traditional rhythms and forms with original variations, a considerable gift as a story-teller, an absolutely sure and relaxed poetic voice, a fierce resistance to the dominant culture of her time, an unusual breadth of psychological expression, a scrupulous precision and economy of formal means, and so forth. While tastes might vary on this, in my opinion, in its poetic achievement, "The Map" is the full equal of Bishop's later poetry. Be it accident or the vagaries of genius, Bishop begins her poetic career at full sail and runs before the wind for the duration.

The speaker in the "The Map" uses a response to the features of a map, presumably a map of the world that can include both North America and Europe ("Newfoundland," "Labrador," "Norway"), as a means for, first, narrative, and then, poetic expression. Some of these responses are unexceptional and therefore what we might expect from a literal description of a map ("Land lies in water; it is shadowed green" and "Labrador's yellow"). The map uses a range of colors ("blue," "green," "tan," "yellow") to distinguish country from country, land from water, shoreline from mainland. Certain topographical features of the land mapped are indicated by color and other means, too: the depth of the water ("shallows"), the elevation of the land ("mountains"). Towns, countries, and bodies of water are named and this language is positioned, not exactly, but appropriately, so that the observer can match the names with the places named ("the names of the seashore towns," "the names of the cities"). Both land and water are shaped in a way that indicates their spatial position and contouring, and some of this spatial contouring is detailed, especially where land and water meet to form identifiable topographies ("seashore," "bays," "peninsulas"). Of course, all maps also have a concern for the cardinal directions and a conventional way of indicating these cardinal directions spatially: North is up, South is down, and so on ("North's as near as West").

In this case, however, the speaker's mind and language, as instruments of that mind, are permitted to add quite a bit that is not at all just a description

of a bare visual perception of the map. For instance, the language that the speaker uses is often subjective and evaluative (e.g., “The shadow of Newfoundland lies flat and still,” “Mapped waters are more quiet than the land is,” “the simple blue,” “the fine tan sandy shape,” “these lovely bays”), more about the speaker’s active and sometimes idiosyncratic emotional, volitional, or imaginative response to the map’s spatial organization rather than just a neutral perceptual response, what anyone might see who looked as the speaker looks and experienced what the speaker experiences as the map is surveyed passively by the eye. In particular, in describing the map, the speaker animates and personifies the map’s geometry and puts the normally fixed spatial configurations on the map into dynamic interaction (“Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under, / Drawing it unperturbed around itself?” “is the land tugging at the sea from under?” “The names of the seashore towns run out to sea, / the names of the cities across the neighboring mountains,” “These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger / like women feeling or the smoothness of yard goods,” “And Norway’s hare runs south in agitation, / profiles investigate the sea, where land is”). Some of these animating and personifying gestures perform communicative tasks that go well beyond the barely descriptive (“Are they assigned or can the countries pick their colors?”). Sometimes the speaker responds to the map with imagined actions (“We can stroke these lovely bays”). Sometimes the speaker imagines how the map might have been produced (“—the printer here experiencing the same excitement / as when emotion too far exceeds its cause”). Sometimes the speaker just adds passing, idiosyncratic, or even zany thoughts that enliven the description (“as if they were expected to blossom,” “as if to provide a clean edge for invisible fish”). As might be expected, these thoughts blur the line, already tentative at best in any description, between what is perceived and what is imagined or remembered from other contexts by the perceiver (“or are they shallows, at its edges / showing the line of long sea-weeded ledges / where the weeds hang to the simple blue from green”). In fact, this more subjective, evaluative, and contextualized language, while subtly and unobtrusively woven into the texture of the description, is so dense and elaborate that, as we read along, the description of the bare visual perception of the map fades into the background. That is, as the text proceeds, the map being described becomes less and less a map and more and more a mind—either directly, by

reporting what that mind is feeling, evaluating, remembering, and imagining, or indirectly, by pushing the quantity and quality of perceptual detail beyond the bounds of what perception can contain so that the perceptual detail cannot help but glow with a completely different register of unspoken, but implied, significance.

Read for its formal/symbolic/expressive significances, “The Map” is unusually broad and inclusive, both in its content and expressive means. If we take the map-maker to be the poet and the map to be the poem (and therefore expression of the poet’s inner life/psyche), then the speaker takes seriously the challenge to the historians in the final two lines of the poem. Good maps/poems, the speaker both argues and demonstrates, while they use formal abstraction and symbolic schemata as their means of expression, are neither indelicate nor one-dimensional, but give us detailed and dynamic expressions of the complex workings of an inner life: “Much more delicate than the historians’ are the map-maker’s colors.”

“The Map” is drenched in archetypal symbolism that is emblematic of the four temporalities, and by way of these temporalities, of our psychological faculties. Bishop draws this symbolism from over twenty-five domains: colors, points of the compass, the cycle of fruition, celestial bodies, topography, body parts, the elements, types of settlement, degrees of freedom, and so forth. The interrelations among these symbols are easiest to see when they are arranged as a map:

	1	2	3	4
	cyclical	centroidal	linear	relative
	sensation	feeling	volition	imagination
	body	emotion	action	reflection
		soul	spirit	mind
points of				
the compass:		South	West	North
countries				
and peoples:	Newfoundland	Labrador	Eskimo	Norway
colors:	green	yellow	tan	blue

	1	2	3	4
motion/speed:	confirmation unperturbed still			excitement agitation
cycle of fruition:		blossom		sea-weeded weeds
proximity:	native neighboring near			
complexity/detail	simple			fine delicate
spatial dimensions:			flat long	shallow
cleanliness:	clean			sea-weeded
animals:	fish			hare
degrees of freedom:	assigned			pick
settlements:		towns	cities	
comparison and evaluation:	same suits	favorites best lovely	more	
spatial directions or positions:	at under	in from around between	across along to	out
elements:	sandy land	water		
body parts:			thumb finger	
language:			names printer	

	1	2	3	4
geometry				
figuration:	profiles	shape	line	
cultural				
production:			historians	
			map-	
			maker	
the senses:	feeling			
	experiencing			
	smoothness			
	stroke			
	quiet		shadows	
	invisible	colors	shadowed	
geographical				
landmarks:	mountains			shore
watercourse:				sea
gender:	women			
material				oiled
medium:				glass
celestial				
bodies:				moony
psychology:	feeling	emotion	character	
parts				
and wholes:		bays		
		peninsulas		
logic:	is			or
				as if
				no

Bishop draws upon the basic four-part organization of poetic imagery with a full-range of different selections from these domains—single selections (e.g., “moony” from the celestial bodies and “near”/“native”/“neighboring”

from proximity), paired contrasts (e.g., “blossom” vs. “weed” in the cycle of fruition, “fish” vs. “hare” among animals, “towns” vs. “cities” among types of settlements, “simple” vs. “fine”/“delicate” in level of complexity/detail, and “confirmation”/“unperturbed”/“still” vs. “excitement”/“agitation” in motion/speed), triplets (e.g., “South” vs. “West” vs. “North” among points of the compass), and even some full quadratures (e.g., “green” vs. “yellow” vs. “tan” vs. “blue” among colors and “Newfoundland” vs. “Labrador” vs. “Eskimo” vs. “Norway” among countries and peoples). Of necessity, such an elaborate use of archetypal symbolism will be blurred and uneven in spots, but all in all, these images sketch a remarkably complete psychological “topography,” a kind of Jungian mandala that Bishop weaves seamlessly into her speaker’s description of the “scene.”

The basic psychological contrast projected by the imagery in “The Map” is between the poles of our sensibilities: “green” and “blue,” “land” and “sea,” which we might interpret as body versus mind, sensation/perception versus reflection/imagination. In the topography of the map, the “profiles” and “colors” of the land/body, its “bays” and “peninsulas,” its emotive “shape,” “investigate” the sea, “draw it . . . around itself,” “tugging at the sea from under,” while the sea in turn washes against the land “in shallows, at its edges” to form “sea-weeded ledges / where weeds hang to the simple blue from green.” The “countries” that are the result, emblems of volition and action, are the home of “cities,” whose names the “printer” scatters here and there, sometimes “out to sea,” sometimes “across the neighboring mountains.” Like “the printer” and the “moony” “Eskimo” “map-maker,” metaphorically, these “countries” are conscious and agentive. The speaker wonders: “Are they assigned or can the countries pick their colors?”

The land, as emblem of the body and cyclical time, is essentially positive, simple, stable, quiet, clean, native, and new—“green” “Newfoundland,” whose “shadow” on the map lies in the water, “flat and still.” The sea is the opposite. Where it meets the land, it is weedy, shallow, delicate, oily, moony, and excited, in its metaphorical nationality and ethnography, “blue Norway,” “whose hare runs south in agitation.” Mediating between these two peripheries, are “yellow Labrador,” emblem of the south (or, at least, the center) and emotion, and the “Eskimo,” emblem of the West and action/volition. The Eskimo is the “map-maker” in the poem, who “oils” the map with a skill “more delicate” than the historians. The color of the

“map-maker” is “tan,” the color of consciousness, linear time, and therefore voluntary action.

As in the poem’s narrative, in many cases, Bishop’s uses this store of images to indicate the dynamic interaction and interpenetration of the psychological faculties rather than their distinctness and difference. Stylistically, the most impressive gestures in this direction are phrases that combine emblems from all of the temporalities—“the fine tan sandy shape,” and “Topography displays no favorites; North’s as near as West.” Much of the poem concerns itself with similar interactions and blendings. “The names of the seashore towns run out to sea, / the names of cities across the neighboring mountains.” “These peninsulas take the water between thumb an finger like women feeling for the smoothness of yard goods.”

“The Map” also makes unusually extensive and balanced use of the other poetic elements—rhythm, linguistic form, and rhetoric.

Cyclical textures in rhetoric and linguistic form give us a strong “feel” for the body, that “green” “Newfoundland,” that “unperturbed,” “simple,” “sandy,” land of “invisible” “fish,” “neighboring” “mountains,” and “women feeling for the smoothness of yard goods.” Syntactically, simple intransitive verbs are frequent (“lie,” “hang,” “lean down,” “blossom”) as are passives (“is shadowed,” “were expected”), compounds (“map-maker’s,” “sea-weeded,” “yard goods”) and simple sentences (“Land lies in water,” “it is shadowed green,” “the names of the seashore town run out to sea,” “the names of the cities [run out] across the neighboring mountains,” “Topography displays no favorites”). Generic nouns are especially frequent, giving the text a feeling of stark, primitive, bareness, like a naked body (“Land,” “water,” “shallows,” “women,” “mapped waters,” “profiles,” “the sea,” “topography,” “North,” “West,” “favorites,” “the map-maker,” “yard goods,” “emotion,” “thumb,” “finger,” “women,” “waters,” “profiles,” “topography,” “the historian,” “a glass,” “blue,” “green”). Given its strong emotive texture in other respects, the poem is also starkly third person (“Land lies in water,” etc.) and paratactic (“Land lies in water; it is shadowed green,” “The names of the seashore town run out to sea, / the names of the cities across the neighboring mountains,” “Topography no favorites; North’s as near as West,” “And Norway’s hare runs south in agitation, / profiles investigate the sea, where land is.”). Except for the rising intonation that accompanies the poem’s three questions, prosodically, the text is similarly simple and reserved: intonation is predominantly falling. Sounds are also

strongly cyclical. The poem is densely alliterated, giving it a physical feel (“land” – “lies” – “along” – “Labrador”; “shadows” – “shallows” – “showing” – “shape” – “seashore”; “clean” – “countries” – “colors” – “character”; “where” – “weeds” – “water” – “we” – “waves” – “women”). Rhetoric is also distinctively physical/cyclical. Troping is strongly metaphoric, as in the text’s pervasive personification (“Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under,” “drawing it unperturbed around itself,” “The names of the seashore towns run out to sea,” / the names of the cities across the neighboring mountains,” “These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger,” “And Norway’s hare runs south in agitation,” “Profiles investigate the sea,” “can the countries pick their colors”). Many of the poem’s rhetorical schemes are also cyclical, for example the anaphoric presentation of the wayward names (“the names of the seashore towns run out to sea, / the names of the cities across the neighboring mountains”) and the odd envelope rhyme scheme in the outer stanzas in the poem, which uses a stark repetition for the outer rhymes (“green” – “edges” – “ledges” – “green”; “under” – “itself” – “shape” – “under”; “is” – “confirmation” – “agitation” – “is”; “colors” – “best” – “west” – “colors”). The text as a whole is also naturally and unselfconsciously repetitive. For example, “green,” “under,” “colors,” “names,” “edge(s),” and “shadow(s)” appear twice. “Water(s)” and “sea” appear three times; and “land,” four times.

Relative forms are also frequent and diverse in “The Map,” giving us a feel for the texture of the other pole of our sensibilities, the “moony,” “blue” “agitation”/“excitement” of memory and imagination, that “lovely” and “delicate” but “shallow,” “weedy” “sea.” Instead of generic nouns, which isolate general sets, these textures use proper nouns (“Labrador,” “Newfoundland,” “Norway,” “Eskimo”), which isolate unique instances. Instead of using strong alliteration, which foregrounds syllabic onsets, these textures use dissonant pararhyme (“land” – “line” – “long” – “lean” – “lending” – “ledges”; “can” – “clean” – “confirmation”; “shadows” – “shallows”; “same” – “simple”; “excitement” – “cities” – “suits”; “best” – “blossom”; “here” – “hare”), which foregrounds syllabic peripheries. Syntactically, these relative textures use the perfect aspect (“has oiled it”), which represents the indefinite past, like memory; comparatives (“the same excitement / as when emotion too far exceed its cause,” “Mapped waters are more quiet than the land is,” “North’s as near as West,” “More delicate than the historians’ are the map-maker’s colors”), which foreground differences; hypotheticals, which consider what is not the case (“as if they were expected to blossom” and “as if to provide a

clean edge for invisible fish”); disjunction, which considers alternatives (“or are they shallows, at its edges,” “Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under,” “or as if to provide a clean edge for invisible fish,” “or can the countries pick their colors”); morphological conversions (“the simple blue,” “from green”), which produce shifts in meaning with just a shift in context; and questions, which doubt and challenge (“Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under?,” “is the land tugging from the sea from under?,” “Are they assigned or can the countries pick their colors?”). The many lines in “The Map” that are just one sentence are also formally relative. With its complexity and nonlinearity, the sentence is a reflex of relative time.

Land lies in water; it is shadowed green.
 More delicate than the historians’ are the map-maker’s colors.
 Are they assigned, or can countries pick their colors?
 What suits the character or the native waters best.
 Topography displays no favorites; North’s as near as West.
 And Norway’s hare runs south in agitation.
 Profiles investigate the sea, where land is.
 The shadow of Newfoundland lies flat and still.

“The Map” is also unusually adverbial, another reflex of relative time, especially in its clauses, which are frequently SVA/SVOA (“lean down,” “lift . . . from under,” “tugging at . . . from under,” “take . . . between,” “feeling for”), having an adverbial complement.

Or does the land lean down to lift the sea from under,
 drawing it unperturbed around itself?
 is the land tugging at the sea from under?
 These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger
 like women feeling for the smoothness of yard goods.

There are also many other adverbials in the poem, which throw syntactic interest away from the central business of the clause with actors and action—subjects, verbs, and objects—to the contextual periphery (“in water,” “at its edges,” “to the simple blue from green,” “under a glass,” “out to sea,” “across the neighboring mountains,” “south in agitation”).

Linear, actional textures in “The Map” give us the feel for intentional and volitional powers of the human agents in the poem, the “Eskimo” “map-maker,” the “printer,” and the “historians,” together with their “shadowed” “countries,” “named” “cities,” and “tan” “topographies,” whose “long” “fingers” and “thumbs” “investigate” the sea. Besides rhythmic gesturing, which we examine in a moment, the major linear forms in “The Map” are, syntactically, its many transitive clauses,

Shadows, or are they shallows, at its edges,
 showing the line of long sea-weeded ledges . . .
 Or does the land . . . lift the sea from under
 drawing it unperturbed around itself
 where the moony Eskimo has oiled it

and, grammatically, its many clausal lines:

showing the line of long sea-weeded ledges
 where weeds hang to the simple blue from green.
 drawing it unperturbed around itself?

The poem also has one progressive verb (“Is the land tugging at the sea from under”), one that is contained in a clausal line.

Lyric/centered textures are also strong in “The Map” and give us a feel for emotive “coloring”—the “profiles” and “shapes” of the countries, their “blossoming” “yellow” “bays” and “peninsulas.” Much of this emotive coloring is rhythmic (more on this in a moment), but syntax, sound, and rhetoric are also significantly lyric. Sonically, the poem is densely assonantal (“land” – “shadowed” – “shallows” – “tan” – “sandy” – “flat” – “Labrador’s” – “can” – “glass” – “mapped”; “green” – “sea” – “weeded” – “lean” – “clean” – “exceeds” – “feeling”; “bays” – “names” – “same” – “wave’s” – “native” – “displays” – “maker’s”), foregrounding the centers of syllables. Rhetorically, the envelope rhyme scheme in the two outer stanzas, however, oddly structured it might be, is emotive, given its centered rhyme pairs (“green” – “edges” – “ledges” – “green”; “is” – “confirmation” – “agitation” – “is”; “colors” – “best” – “west” – “colors”). And the syntax is present tense (“lies,” “is,” “are,” “hang,” etc.) and in many places, copular in its

clause structure (“It is shadowed green,” “Newfoundland lies flat and still,” “Labrador’s yellow,” “Mapped waters are more quiet,” “More delicate than the historians are the map-maker’s colors”), highlighting adjectives and their lyric qualities. In this respect, “The Map” is richly lyric; it is awash in adjectives (“long,” “sea-weeded,” “unperturbed,” “tan,” “sandy,” “flat,” “still,” “yellow,” “blue,” “green,” “lovely,” “clean,” “invisible,” “neighboring,” “quiet,” “delicate”).

While these effects are more subconscious, much of the achievement of “The Map,” its ability to convey with form a remarkably full and complex subjectivity, is rhythmic. The rhythm of “The Map” also presents a brilliantly delicate configuration of interacting psychic opposites/complements.

The central thrust of “The Map’s” rhythmic organization is lyric/centered. The text maintains a consistent pentameter meter throughout, the canonical lyric meter, albeit one that gets progressively looser and more ambiguous as the poem proceeds.

Land lies in water; it is shadowed green
 tactus

And within this pentameter, “The Map” has many demotions and syncopations, where the voice dominates the meter.

DEMOTIONS

Land lies, long sea-weeded, lean down, lies flat, these love[ly], clean edge, run out, too far, These peninsulas, Mapped waters, runs south, what suits, no favorites, More delicate, is the land tugging

Syncopations

Shadows, showing, drawing, hang to, Labrador’s, lending, own confirmation, Profiles

Aspects of higher levels of beating in “The Map” are also significantly lyric. Following its visual presentation, the twenty-seven lines of the poem are divided at the highest level into three metrical sections (lines 1–8, 9–19, and 20–27), a lyric/emotive organization.

Meter is basically duple, but it permits this duple patterning to be stretched to triple patterning, either in a local way (what prosodists call “caudation,” or possessing a tail) or as a norm. The pentameter, with its five beats, is consistently caudated. One of its two half-lines (or what I like to call metrical “lobes”) has three beats rather than two. “The Map” is caudated at the highest metrical level. The third stanza caudates the first two. Codas are emotive because they bend meter, which prefers duple patterning, toward the freedom of rhythmic grouping.

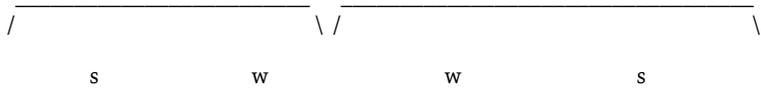
“The Map” is caudated at many other levels, too. The first metrical section (lines 1–8) divides regularly into two quatrains, but the second stanza (lines 9–19), which has eleven lines, has five lines in its first stanza and six lines in its second. The extra line in its first stanza (“or as if to provide a clean edge for invisible fish”) caudates the stanza’s second part. The two extra lines in the second stanza (“These peninsulas take the water between thumb and finger / like women feeling for the smoothness of yard goods”) caudates this second stanza as a whole, adding a third part. The fact that these two codas are both at different levels and placed in the central section of the poem is significant. Caudation is emotive, and rhythmically, emotive expression is centroidal/centering in its texture. Independent of meter, many aspects of “The Map’s” rhythmic phrasing, the shaping and proportioning of the voice, the most central aspect of vocal expressiveness in language, are also significantly lyric.

Despite the asymmetrical meter at high levels, in my reading, the three metrical sections in “The Map” all have exactly fourteen tone units, the basic unit of informational expression in voicing. Such tight control of phrasal parallels is not at all unusual in poems that are significantly emotive in their rhythmic ordering. Of course, fourteen is an important number in lyric poetry. Sonnets, the ultimate lyric form, have fourteen lines.

Tone Units in Metrical Section 1

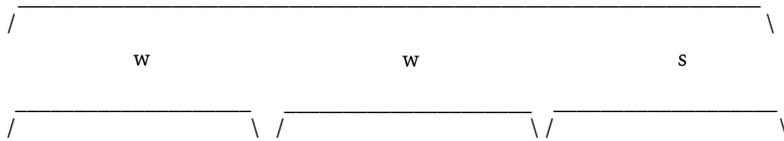
Land lies in water;
it is shadowed green.
Shadows,
or are they shallows,

and so forth



Mapped waters ... lending ... And Norway's hare ... Profiles investigate ...

Many phrasal structures at levels within the tone unit are also anapestic and therefore emotive.



Land	lies	in water
showing	the line	of long sea-weeded
ledges		
of long	sea-weeded	ledges
or does the land	lean	down
to lift	the sea	from under
drawing it	unperturbed	around itself

and so on

There are also quite a few chiasmic structures at low levels of phrasing (e.g., “showing the line,” “under a glass,” “lending the land”).

As the poem proceeds, the pentameter in “The Map” loosens up considerably, however, and in doing so, becomes more antimelismatic and therefore more linear. Unstressed syllables multiply rather than stressed syllables and the voice runs free of the duple meter. Even where syllables are controlled, stresses thin out and the voice accelerates relative to the meter. Many tactical beats are not stressed, a rhythmic figure that prosodists call “promotion” (“that the land,” “agitation,” “investigate,” “Are they assigned,” “or can the countries,” “the character,” “or the native,” “Newfoundland”). The major cause of these promotional figures is an expanded lower-level phrasing, which is not triple but quadruple.

/	\	\	\
it	is	sha-	dowed
at	its	ed-	ges
to	the	sim-	ple
Or	does	the	land
a-	round	it-	self
the fine	tan	sandy	shape
is the land	tugging	at the sea	from under
of	New-	found-	land
where	the	moon-	y
has	oi-	led	it

and so on

As the poem proceeds, the pentameter also loosens up and exercises its options to tolerate elision, anacrusis, and feminine ending (“Or does the land,” “from under,” “The shadow of Newfoundland,” “where the moony Eskino,” “has oiled it,” “experiencing,” “yard goods,” “confirmation,” “agitation,” “or can the countries,” “their colors,” “the character or the native waters,” “the map-maker’s color,” “mountains,” “excitement”).

While it is possible to continue to read the poem in a pentameter, at some point, this metrical strain is so great that the meter strongly suggests metrical alternatives, or in some extreme cases, no meter at all. That is, meter and phrasing become so tensely juxtaposed that the result would be considered unacceptable as pentameters by many poets and readers, although this would be a matter of taste, not absolute unmetricality. For instance, line 4 (“where weeds hang to the simple blue from green”) syncopates the second tactical beat in the line, a very destabilizing gesture. Line 7 (“Along the fine tan sandy shape”) has only nine syllables, an even more radical deviation from the phrasal norms of the pentameter. A syllable is omitted.

More radically yet, lines 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 17, 21, 24, 25, and 26 have so many extra syllables that they can be read productively with a triple pulse, and the phrasing of line 19 is so tensely related to meter that the line can be read as an accentual tetrameter. Undoubtedly on purpose, the final two lines are so metrically ambiguous that they each can be read in five different ways—as a duple or a triple pentameter, as a duple or triple hexameter, or as

an accentual tetrameter. Clearly, at this point, meter is so loose as to become something else, little more than an occasion for metrical variation and blurring, and therefore a more relativistic pattern.

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NOTE

1. For an overview of the rhythemics that I use to ground my temporal poetics, see Cureton *Rhythmic Phrasing* and “metrical reading.” For overviews of the basic principles of my temporal poetics, see Cureton “Rhythm, Temporality,” “Language of Poetry,” and “Telling Time.” For how I use rhythm to motivate linguistic form, see Cureton “Toward a Temporal Theory.”

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