How to Show Things with Words: On the Iconic Representation of Themes by Expression-Plane Means

In his Notes to Don Juan (Canto 1: XI), Byron relates the story of a poetic combat between two English poets. Challenged with

(1) I, John Sylvester,
Lay with your sister,

the other countered:

(2) I, Ben Jonson, lay with your wife.

"Sylvester answered,—‘That is not rhyme’.—‘No’, said Ben Jonson: ‘but it is true’.

Ben Jonson here pushes to the extreme the realistic principle of "naked truth" that has no place for any sort of fiction, to say nothing of such useless ornaments as rhyme. Of course, art has never followed these ultradocumentalist precepts. It has been quite willing to use, for the expression of its themes, fictional characters and events, and a wide variety of metrical, compositional, and other patterns. Moreover, rhyme, meter, and other semantically irrelevant adornments often directly represent certain elements of the theme. It is this concretization of thematic elements by units of the code sphere that will constitute the subject of this chapter. This type of CONCR is in fact

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tionally, on a sort of contingent basis—as the content plane of the former, that is, by virtue of convention. The fact is that the meaning of the word again is only symbolized in text (3), while the same meaning when enacted by the repetitions of the word, is manifested iconically and therefore quite graphically and palpably. Roughly speaking, the Spanish lady and her intentions are fictional, whereas the repetition of the word again is a fact.

A paradox thus arises: the additional conventionality of code-sphere concretizations consists in supplementing the arbitrary symbolic relation between the signifier and the signified with a “natural” iconic one. And the fact that the code-sphere concretes proves more “absolute” and unconditional follows from the fundamental conventionality, that is, arbitrariness, of language. This double paradox seems, however, to be one of the essential properties of the literary code.5

The code-sphere concretes are, on the one hand, more striking, and original than “normal,” referential concretes—since establishing iconic similarity between thematic elements and units of expression plane is a difficult and spectacular artistic feat. On the other hand, these concretes are “swallowed” by the reader almost imperceptibly, subliminally, as something that goes without saying; by virtue of the automatism of the practical language, their connection with the theme is not perceived explicitly—they are, after all, purely “formal” and “meaningless.” We have to do here with an extreme instance of a fundamental principle of all art—the refusal to name ideas directly that leads to their embodiment in a material that is more palpable and, at the same time, more “remote” and resistant. A first-order convention (that of plot narration) projects ideas onto objects and situations of the referential sphere (see Chap. 2). The second-order convention we are concerned with involves the code sphere with its greater arbitrariness as well as its greater “naturalness”: it authorizes the projection of ideas onto the still less yielding material of phonetics, syntax, meter and composition.

The difficulty of such projection results in a comparative scarcity of the themes for which it is possible. Sometimes only a part of a thematic complex can be projected onto the code sphere; for instance, in the limerick, (9), this is the case of the various statements concerning “it,” but not of the “it” itself. In addition, the code concretes is usually in need of a parallel referential concret, which

1. prompts the correct interpretation, e.g., in (3) the repetition (a code-sphere phenomenon) takes place in the context of the thematic

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element ‘multiple’ (denoted in the referential sphere by the word again—actually the repeated word) and reads accordingly

2. helps connect the disparate thematic elements (iconically expressed through code concretes) into a coherent statement, e.g., in (3), the code-sphere manifestations 1–7 cohere into a meaningful message about life only if the referential sphere is taken into account.

As the set of themes that admit of code-sphere concretes is rather limited, it may be possible to calculate it formally. Theoretically speaking, these should be all and only those thematic elements that are common to the two spheres; that is, such as ‘beginning’ and ‘end’; ‘more’ and ‘less’; ‘principal’ and ‘secondary’; ‘boundary’; ‘observing’; and ‘violating’; etc. (see [1976a: 31; 1977a: 15]). Still, it would seem advisable to start with empirical accumulation of the relevant data. As a step in this direction I propose to discuss three groups of examples.

1.1. Let us begin with a fairly obvious case (from Mayakovky’s Obyako v stnax (“The cloud in trousers”)):

(5) Voša ty
rezkoja, kak “nate!”
muža perčatzki zanž,
Skazala:
“Znaete—
Ja vyxozu zamuž.”

Entered you
Snappish as “here you are!”
Torturing [your] kid gloves,
Said:
“You know—
I am getting married.”

Here the first members of both rhyming pairs are, in the segments after the stress, one syllable shorter than the second: nate/znaete; zanž/zamuž. Now, Mayakovky’s rhymes in general tend to punning exactness, an effect achieved by stretching and adjusting the different sound complexes while superimposing them on each other (cf. the typical rhymes razžal usta ‘opened the lips’/požalujsta ‘please’; let do sti rasti ‘[supposed to] grow for [about] a hundred years’/nam bez starosti ‘we, without getting] old’, and so on). In such cases the “equating” principle results in the clarification of the reduced unstressed vowels by means of scansion (požaluj-sta, sti-rasti). In (5), on the contrary, equating requires the extra syllable to be skipped in the second members of the rhymes: since there is no way of stretching nate into znaete, znaete has to shrink to znae. In this way the difference of rhyming endings encodes an abrupt, that is, snappish (cf. rezkoja
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Remarkably widespread and even underlies the patently anilliterary text (2). Ben Jonson’s witticism owes its bite to a minus-device (Lotman 1977), that is, the renunciation of an accepted formal constraint (in this case, rhyme, and more specifically, the rhyme ‘son’, prompted by the analogy with “sister”). Minus-devices rely heavily on the conventionality of artistic form and are valid only in confrontation with such conventionality (in this case, with the rhymed text (1)). Minus-devices use conventions—by violating them—in order to concretize the theme of ‘truth, reality, authenticity (and not conventionality, fiction); cf. Ben Jonson’s own comments on (2).

A related theme is developed by somewhat similar code-sphere means in:

(3) There once was a lady of Spain,
Who said: “Let us do it again
And again and again
And again and again
And again and again and again.”

In spite of—or, rather, in subtle concord with—the fact that the heroine is fictional and anonymous and the narration circumlocutional (unlike in (2)), the code-sphere aspect of the limerick (3) creates a fairly detailed, if mischievously noncommittal, picture of the theme.

1. The thematic element ‘regular reiteration’, directly expressed in the referential sphere by the word again (or the phrase again and again), is “enacted” by the regular and multiple repetition of this word in the text.

2. The increase in the number of occurrences of the word again with each new line (0-1-2-2-3) reads clearly as an iconic representation of ‘increase, climax’.

3. Another essential element of the theme is represented by the fact that the last three lines, and therefore all the three rhyme slots (that call for new lexical material), are filled exclusively with one and the same word—again—providing an iconic concretization of Θ ‘only X and nothing but X’.

4. The poetic form of limerick is treated in such a way that only the most elementary constraints are observed: the 5-line aab ba pattern with longer lines 1, 3, 5 and shorter lines 2, 4. The rules that provide for any originality are violated: the two series of rhymes (a and b) should be phonetically different, but are identical; the rhyming words should be different, but are the same. This play with convention (of the minus-device type) conveys iconically a rather subtle message: ‘it is original to be banal and stick to fundamentals’.

5. A similar effect is also produced, on the level of plot and characterization, by the contrast between the conventionally specific and even exotic protagonist (a lady of Spain) and her pointedly trivial behavior (it is so trivial, in fact, that it can be dismissed with an it).

6. This “it,” as well as the complete absence in text (3) of any more specific reference to the implied ‘lovemaking’, conveys, iconically again, the ‘unmentionability’ of the subject.

7. This, together with items 4 and 5 above makes the limerick an instance of ‘ostensibly “plain” and artless, but in fact very rich and sophisticated, structure’ with the characteristic emphasis on the code sphere (“poetry of grammar” in Jakobson’s classic formulation).

Taken all together, the iconic concretizations add up to something like the following message:

(4) An original and subtly playful claim that, trivial and conventionally unmentionable as it is, lovemaking, with its regularity, multiplicity and culminating gusso, is a fundamental, in fact, the sole important thing.

The way this theme, (4), is embodied in text (3) is somehow at once more arbitrary, dependent on “artificial” play with convention, and more graphic than in the case of an ordinary plot; it is more subtle and subliminal and yet more striking. How can we account for this?

The greater arbitrariness of code-sphere concretizations consists in the following: the interpretation of the text “unexpectedly” takes into account those properties of the signifier, which, under the normal convention of language and plot, are considered irrelevant for the signified. Generally speaking, the content plane should be absolutely unaffected by the phonetic, rhythmic, and other patterns formed by the constituents of the text—apart from the morphological, syntactic, intersessional and, finally, narrative conventions specified by the “primary” linguistic-and-literary code. For the perception and thematic interpretation of these patterns, an additional convention has to be introduced.

On the other hand, the same arbitrariness of linguistic code is responsible for the “actual and indisputable” presence of the signifiers in the text, whereas the signified meanings are there only condi-
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'snappish' in the second line of (5) enunciation of the words in question (snaete, zamuzek). As a result, the 'abruptness, snappiness', which is called in (5) by name, is concretized iconically by code-sphere means.

Moreover, a code CONCR is provided for a still larger segment of the direct message of the text, namely, for the simile drawn between the heroine's abruptness and the abrupt word nate!: first the simile is spelled out for the reader (in the second line) and then it is realized literally by the code-sphere equation of the heroine's statement (snaete 'you know') with the abruptness of nate.

The overall construction is made more convincing (if less original) by the fact that the words snaete and zamuzek are part of a character's direct, oral speech and, therefore, admit of reduction and play with the manner of pronunciation more easily than would the "objective," authorial speech.

Thus,

(6) abruptness CONCR "shrunk rhyme," skipping a syllable in the ending of the second member of the pair.

1.2. Pushkin's Obval ("Avalanche") is written in six-line stanzas consisting of iambic tetrameters and dimeters. In all the stanzas but one the dimeters comprise two words; in the second stanza, however, these short lines are composed of one word each:

(7) Otol' sorval'sja raz obval,
 I s tjažkim grozotom upal,
 I v su tešninu među skal
 Zagorodil,
 I Tereka mogućeg važ
 Ostanovil.

From there once there broke loose an avalanche,
And it fell down with heavy rattle,
And the entire right place between the cliffs
[It] blocked,
And the mighty flow of Terek
[It] stopped.

The theme of 'a mound of snow so big that it blocks the entire space and stops all movement' is twice concretized in the code sphere. Two whole lines are occupied each by a single word that concludes the sentence so that any further syntactic development is blocked: the sentence cannot be continued in the following lines, nor can there be any syntactic links within the line, that is,

(8) (a) taking up the entire space CONCR a single word occupying the whole line

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(b) stopping the movement CONCR the last word of a sentence being the only word in the line.6

1.3. Note Pushkin's Carskosel'skaia statnaja ("A statue in Carskoe Selo"):

(g) Urnu s vodoj uroniv, ob utes ee deva rastila. Having dropped an urn with water, a maiden broke it against a rock.
Devu pečal'no sikit, prazdnij derža čerepok. The maiden is uselessly sitting, holding a useless crock.
Čudo! ne sjeknet voda, izlivajas' iz urny razzvbój. A miracle! the water does not run dry, pouring forth from the broken urn.
Devu, na večnjij struej, vечно pečal'na sikit. The maiden, over the eternal jet, sits, eternally rueful.

Central to the poem is combination of 'the momentary' with 'the eternal' and of 'movement' with 'rest'.7 The first line, in particular, depicts 'momentary movement'. I will concentrate on its code-sphere concretization in the first hemistich.

1. Two two-syllable words are followed by one three-syllable word which is syntactically the most important; phonetically, the third word includes certain features of the two preceding words (see item 4. below). As a result, the sequence 2 + 2 + 3 constitutes a summing pattern (ideally, [2 + 2] + 4), capable of conveying 'intense increase' and 'completed development' (Mazel' and Cukkerman 1967: 397–441).8

2. On the rhythmical level first comes the most static trochaic motif (−−, a downbeat pattern, an impulse which then fades away); this is followed by a more dynamic iambic one (−−, an upsurge of activity), which is further "stretched" into a still more intense anapaest (−−). The stressed syllable is, as it were, made to relinquish its initial position of rest (in the first word) and to shift first to the second place (in the second word) and finally to the third, thus describing a trajectory.9

3. This gradual rhythmical dynamization is accompanied by the lexical sequence: "a static object ('urn')—a liquid ([with] water)—a verb of motion ('dropped')."

4. On the phonetic level there is a parallel vowel shift to the front from u via o to the intense i; the outline of the shift is summarized in the third word [urnui]; this is even more evident in spelling: u- u/o/0/0/a-0-i. The consonants are also partly summarized: wroniv contains r-n from urnu and a labial fricative from vodoj.10 The summariz-
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... lends phonetic support to the summing pattern of item 1, while the presence and the direction of the vowel shift upholds the trajectory of items 2 and 3.

5. At the same time, the continuity of the phonetic material (in the three words, especially the first and the third) seems to indicate that we are dealing with the same urn, formerly static and solid but now transformed into pure movement. This, by the way, is another reason for treating the stressed syllable that describes a trajectory (see item 2) as a one and the same entity. 11

6. 'Completion' (mentioned in passing in item 1) is expressed, in the referential sphere, by the meaning of the verb ('to drop') as well as by the fact that in the verb of the main clause (which the gerund uronis having dropped' points syntactically) the movement does not continue: instead, the main verb, razbila 'broke', states the result. Rhythmically, the 'completion' is CONCRETIZED through the stressed syllable's attaining, as a result of displacements, a final position (a property which is, admittedly, the rule for initial hemistichs of the elegiac distich). Syntactically, uronis is followed by a stop (the comma at the end of the gerund phrase); metrically, by a caesura.

All these factors combine to produce a fairly accurate code-sphere equivalent of the 'falling (of an urn)'.

(10) an object relinquishes its immobility and describes a trajectory; the movement intensifies as it approaches completion.

The main constituents of this overall code CONCR are:

(11) (a) dynamization, increase and completion CONCR the summing pattern CONCR [s + s] + s, in which s is rendered heavier in several respects (e.g., it phonetically summarizes [s + s]); (b) dynamization, trajectory, completion CONCR displacement of the stressed syllable from the first place in the word to the second and then the third and last place; (c) trajectory CONCR the vowel shift to the front [u-o-d]; (d) identity of the (moving) object CONCR phonetic similarity of words.

1.4. The theme of the poem À mes amis ('To my friends') by Evariste Parny may be formulated approximately as

(12) exhortation to enjoy life in defiance of all obstacles.

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Of special interest is the third stanza:

(13) Un jour il nous faudra courber
    Sous la main du temps qui nous
    presse,
    Mais jouissons dans la jeunesse,
    Et dérobons à la vieillesse
    Tout ce qu'on peut lui dérober.

One day we will have to bend
Under the hard of time pressing us,
But let us be joyous in youth,
And let us withhold from old age
All that can be withheld from it.

This stanza is crucial in several respects: it is the last; it is one line longer than the two preceding ones (an INCREASE, also functioning as the change that marks the end); it contains a striking paronomasia (jouissons—jeunesse), highlighting the theme of 'youth and enjoyment'. I will concentrate on the rhyming and stanzaic pattern as a means of iconic code CONCR. 12

In the first and second stanzas the rhyming pattern is abba; in the third, abba. In other words, from the outset the appearance of the last rhyme is maximally postponed; in the last stanza it is delayed still longer by the addition of an extra penultimate line. The effect is one of 'postponement of the end (of the stanza, the poem)', which echoes the idea of 'taking as much as possible away from old age and death' as expressed in the penultimate, that is, 'extra' (!) line. Therefore,

(14) (a) postponing the end CONCR abba type of rhyme;
(b) abba rhyme scheme that postpones the end ACONC 5-line abba last stanza after a succession of abba quatrains.

Rule (14a) is also exemplified by a stanza from Pasternak's Poездha ('A ride').

(15) Na věz parax neštěsja poezd
    Koleša veruit parovoz.
    I les krucon smolst i xvoist,
    I čto-to vperedë ešce est',
    I sklon berezami poros.

The train is running at full speed,
The locomotive is turning the wheels.
The wood around is resinos and coniferous.
And there is yet something ahead,
And the slope is grown with birch-trees.

Here, too, it is in the last of the two internal lines (rhyming in bb), that is, the 'extra' one, that 'postponing the end' is expressed in the referential sphere: I čto-to vperedë ešce est 'And there is yet something ahead'. 13
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1.5. Our next example also has to do with the ‘approach of death’. Bulat Okudzhava’s poem *Pervoj gvozd* ‘The first nail’ (describing the ritual of ‘consecrating’ a newly built house by drinking) concludes as follows:

(16) Pervoj gvozd v pervoj svae rżaveet,
my p’em,
on rżaveet, my p’em, on rżaveet.

The first nail in the first pile is
getting rusty, we are drinking,
getting rusty.

The poem’s theme combines Okudzhava’s invariant motifs ‘the beginning, the first’ and ‘the brevity of life, the inexorable march of time’. The comb is based on an ‘increase of hopelessness’ (also an invariant, see [1979a]). The ‘march of time’ is concretized through the repetition of manifestations of ‘life’ (my p’em ‘we are drinking’) and of ‘approaching old age and death’ (rżaveet ‘is getting rusty’), which alternate regularly, as equals. In the first line ‘life’ literally has the last word: p’em occupies the prominent final position. But this line is not the last: it functions as the recoil stage of a sudden turn. As the ‘march of time’ is taken in its entirety—prolonged until the very end of the poem—it is ‘death’ that has the last word. In the referential sphere this is supported by the self-evident fact that all that exists (life, buildings, nails, ... ) is transitory, in particular, by the fact that ‘rusting’ is a longer and more relentless process than ‘drinking’. As a result, (16) expresses iconically a fairly complex thematic-expressive message:

(17) in spite of the regularity of the alternation of X and Y, and even of the odds being temporarily in favor of X ‘life’, the course of Z ‘time’ results in Y ‘death’. (NB: the elements ‘life’, ‘death’, and ‘time’ are supplied by the referential sphere).

The principal constituent rules of the overall rule (17) → (16) are as follows:

(18) (a) regular process CONCR alternation: X-Y-Y-... ;
(b) odds in favor of X CONCR the last link in the chain of alternations is X;
(c) taking the whole scope of the process into consideration CONCR prolonging the chain of alternations up to the end of a longer segment (a stanza, an entire poem);
(d) Y in spite of Anti Y CONCR s-TURN CONCR sequence ‘line ending in Anti Y—line, ending in Y’.

2. Reaching across Boundaries

From cases of mere ‘lengthening, stretching’ of a segment, I will now proceed to those of its encroachments on the territory of the following one. The themes which can be expressed iconically thereby are more or less predictable. The violation of a boundary is associated with ‘breakthrough’, ‘sweeping increase’, and so on; the establishment of new boundaries, with ‘containment’, ‘statics’, ‘rest’. The interpretation is given further subtle nuances by the more immediate referential and code-sphere context.

2.1. In Pushkin’s lyric “I loved you...” developing the ambivalent opposition ‘passion/restraint’ (see Chap. 9), the assertion of ‘passion’ reaches its peak in the seventh line:

(19) Ja vas ljubil tak ihrenno, tak učeno “I loved you so sincerely, so tenderly.”

As I have pointed out (see Chap. 9, §1.2), this line is the only one in the entire poem that is completely affirmative: in the first line the leitmotif assertion is stopped short by the midline caesura; in the fifth, it manages to reach the end of the line but only so under the cover of negatives (bezmolno ‘without words’, beznadežno ‘without hope’). This “horizontal” breakthrough of affirmation is combined with another code-sphere ‘breakthrough’, this time “vertical.” The poem consists of two quatrains forming a number of parallelisms. The first stanza introduces a pattern of clear-cut thematic division: two lines about ‘former passion’ and two lines about ‘future restraint’. In the second stanza, however, the theme of ‘former passion’ spills over the boundary between the two periods, thus producing an “extra” line about ‘love’, the seventh (see Chap. 9, §1.2).

(20) breakthrough CONCR shifting a thematic boundary forward across a formal one as compared with their coincidence in the preceding stanzas.

It is worth noting that although this example is very much like example (13), the presence of an “extra” line in the two cases receives different interpretations, cf. rules (20) and (14b), which, by the way, reflect the necessary measure of similarity: ‘postponement [of death]’ is, in a sense a ‘breakthrough [for life]’.

2.2. In the first stanza of the same Pushkin poem the ‘continuation of love from the past into the present’ is also expressed by the interplay of meter and syntax. The sentence in which this theme is
A central component of the theme is

(23) increasing dynamism, rushing forward.

In the referential sphere this is expressed by a gradual acceleration of the depicted states ("laugh", "crackle", "running jump", "waltzing", "hurrying") and emphasized, in the last two lines, by crossing a certain "boundary": "... Into the hall encircled [lit. "girdled"] by a chandelier, behind a curtain, ..."

This expressive pattern is echoed in the code sphere. First of all, the "aim of the movement" (zal 'hall') is accorded the final place in the sequence. Syntactically, all four stanzas form a single period (="rushing"), divided by stanzaic boundaries, which are marked by periods (="boundaries"). The latter are, however, overcome by the syntactic continuity of the text: periods are merely emphatic, for they separate clauses of a single complex sentence: 'I live with ... whose ... the one that ... with which ... //Which ... will ... jump ...//In order to ...//In order to ...' (= "crossing the boundaries").

Within individual stanzas the 'crossing of boundaries' takes the form of close syntactic links reaching over line breaks, for example, "a tea-rose, crazy, / Fumed bud"; in some cases the effect is enhanced by inversion, for example, "tangerine's/Chilling lobules to swallow" instead of the normal word order "to swallow the chilling lobules of a tangerine."

An exact code-sphere counterpart of 'rushing across the boundary' is present in the penultimate line. An extra syllable, unprovided for by the meter (anapaestic tetrameter), is introduced between the second and the third stressed syllables: ljusto, [pojzadi]. This makes for a pause which is also prompted by the syntax (comma). As a result, a new 'boundary' appears in addition to and right between the 'girdling chandelier' and the 'curtain':

(24) rushing across a separating boundary CONC a syntactic entity transcending the boundaries between clauses, stanzas, lines, caesurae.

2.3. Another rule of the same kind as (21), (24) underlies a codesphere CONC in the following Pasternak fragments:

(25) (a) Lodka kolotitja v sonoj grudii, Ivy navisl, celijut v ključici, A boat is beating in a somnolent breast.
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V lokti, v ukijuciny—o, pogodi, 
Eto ved' mozhet so vjakim stuz'ijal

(b) Net vremeni u voznoven'ja. 
Boloto, 
Zemlia li, i' more, i' luža,— 
Mne zdes' snoviden'e javlos', i stědy 
Svedu s nim sežas že i tut ţe.

Willows hang over, kiss on the 
collar bones, 
On the elbows, on the rowlocks—o, 
wait, 
This really can happen to anyone!

Inspiration is short of time. Swamp, 
Ground, or sea, or a puddle.— 
It is here that a dream has visited 
me, and the scores 
With it I will settle right now and 
right here.

In both cases the message concerns a powerful force ('ecstasy of love'; 'creative inspiration') that acts blindly and indiscriminately upon everything within its reach. In the code sphere this is rendered by an enumeration which crosses the line boundary. Two specific characteristics of this 'crossing' should be noted:

1. The lines in which the enumeration begins (second in (25a); first in (25b)) contain only one term and it is only after the line break that the fact of enumeration becomes known.

2. The end of the enumeration does not coincide with the end of a larger unit; in (25a) the enumeration ends in the middle of a line; in (25b) although the enumeration ends at the end of the line, the sentence continues (or, rather, it just begins, the enumeration being an elliptical conditional clause).

These two properties make the enumeration 'chaotic, improptu, unfinished'. In the referential sphere this is expressed by the general import of the sentence and also: in (25a), by the 'confusion' of parts of the human body ('klijuciny' collar bones', lokti 'elbows') and those of the boat ('ukujuciny' rowlocks'); in (25b), by emphatic and diverse—"no matter which"—conjunctions (comma, 'i', 'i'). To sum up:

(26) (a) = (21);
(b) many enumeration;
(c) chaos, disorder enumeration begins with the last word of a line and its end does not coincide with major boundaries.

2.4. 'Breaking through boundaries' is often accompanied by phonetic similarity, which concretizes iconically the identity of objects (cf. §1.3, item 5; rule (11b); and note 11). For instance, in "I loved you . . ." (see Chap. 9), whose theme includes 'continuation of love', this construction occurs in the very first line. The boundary is marked by the end of the sentence and, therefore, a falling intonation, and the switch of tense ( ljubil 'loved' / bijt 'možet 'may be'). This boundary is then crossed in the referential sphere by the statement that love continues and in the code sphere by the lexical and phonetic similarity of the words ljubil 'loved' / ljubov' 'love' which straddle the boundary. This makes for an effect of 'relay', reinforced by the relation between the two intonational patterns—the falling (i.e., spent), in ljubil and the rising (i.e., incipient and forward-aiming), in ljubov'.

However, in accordance with the general 'muffling of passion' in the poem, the 'relay' is far from active. A more clear-cut and energetic 'relay' is found in the lines:

(27) Stoit Istomina; ona, 
Odnoj negoj kasašas' pola, . . .
There is Istomina standing; she,
Touching the floor with one foot, . . .

followed by a description of the ballerina's pirouettes and leaps. The referential identity of the words on both sides of the semicolon is obvious (Istomina and ona 'she' refer to the same person); it is echoed in the code sphere by their phonetic similarity (i-ja-a-a-
ā).

The 'relay crossing of the border' is supported by a number of devices. The transition from the end of a sentence to the beginning of a new one resembles, on the whole, the preceding example, with the difference that the preboundary phase occupies a much greater part of the line, while the new impulse is reduced to a two-syllable word. As a result, both the 'stop' and the new 'impulse' are stressed. The 'stop' is expressed, in the referential sphere, by the posture (stoit 'stands') and this is in turn reinforced, in the code sphere, by a paronymy (stoit = Istomina); the 'impulse' is strengthened by the fact that a short subject (ona) is allotted all the intensity of the high intonational beginning of a new sentence. The shortness of this intense ona is emphasized by the end of the line and a comma, which separates it from the gerund construction in the following line. In the referential sphere ona 'she' is the subject of a series of motion verbs (toward which it is syntactically directed). Rhythmically, ona is a rising (i.e., dynamic) iambic motif (‘-‘), which contrasts with the falling (i.e., "braking") Istomina (‘-‘). Thus,

(28) relay of a spent movement and the spreading of it across a boundary phonetic similarity of words on both sides of the boundary, the first of
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them having a falling rhythmic-intonational pattern, and the second, a rising one.\footnote{17}

2.5. Let us now turn to a rule that is opposite to (21), (24) and the like:

(29) reserve, restraint, “braking” \textit{CONCR} pauses.

This iconic \textit{CONCRETIZATION} of ‘restraint’ is widely spread; compare, for instance, the penultimate line of Pushkin’s “Upon the hills of Georgia . . .,” discussed in detail in Chap. 8, §7. I will now consider a more specific use of ‘pause’.

2.6. The third line of the poem \textit{Carskolevškaja statuja} (see ex. (9)) mentions in so many words the ‘miracle’ of the girl’s metamorphosis into a statue:

(30) \textit{Čudo! ne sjahnet voda, izlivajas’ iz urny razbitoj}. “A miracle! the water does not run dry, pouring forth from the broken urn.”

The ‘miracle’ is also projected into the code sphere, and the resulting code \textit{CONCR} is superimposed on the very word \textit{čudo} ‘miracle’. The ‘miracle’ is described in the third (i.e., the culminating) line of the quatrain (the fourth assuming the role of a final still). The word \textit{čudo} is stressed by the exclamatory intonation, making it the poem’s single emotional outburst set against a pronouncedly calm epic background. Syntactically, the word forms a separate sentence, set off by the line break on the left and the exclamation mark and the pause on the right, the pause being the only one in the whole poem situated at this point (after the first foot). Since the usual caesura (after the third foot) is also present, the line falls into three (instead of the usual two) autonomous syntagms and becomes the most ‘weighty’ in the whole poem. The third line \textit{COMBINES} this “weight” with emotional intensity (incidentally, it is the only line in the poem that does not end with a period). Thus,

(31) miraculous, strange, unusual \textit{CONCR} a special (e.g., culminating) line; departure from a norm or inertia characteristic of the text (e.g., an extra pause).\footnote{18}

This rule has much in common with the notion of “rhythmic italics” as introduced by Taranovsky (1976: 142), the difference being that, in addition to mere expressiveness, (31) involves a code-sphere \textit{CONCR} of a thematic element.

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The specific form the ‘departure from norm’ assumes in (30)—namely, that it manifests itself as an ‘extra pause’—seems to be determined by rule (32):

(32) \textit{miracle CONCR} suspension (of the laws of nature; of the activities of the dumbfounded observer) \textit{CONCR} a pause.

Reference to an observer’s reaction is quite legitimate, since it is implied that the remark \textit{Čudo! ‘A miracle!’} belongs to one.

3. Transfer to the Frame

3.1. The opposition between the “frame” of a text (e.g., the frame story featuring the narrator and his listeners) and the “content proper” (the inner, or framed story, told by the narrator) is one of the most general categories of the code sphere. The iconic potential of ‘transfer to the frame’ comprises several characteristics inherent in this code-sphere pattern.

1. First of all, the relation between its two components resembles the relation between the extratextual reality and the text itself: the frame connotes ‘reality, unconditionality, something taken for granted’, while the framed story (i.e., the “text proper”) connotes ‘arbitrariness, invention, fiction,’ etc.

2. In eliminating the boundary between the two components the ‘transfer’ lends itself to interpretations involving ‘destruction, death, obliteration, annihilation’.

3. In encompassing, together with the “content,” the “container” itself (i.e., “all there is” in the text), it can embody the theme of ‘completeness, universality, finality’.

4. Finally, the very switch to the opposite is a particular case of sudden turn. In addition to purely expressive effects, this construction helps convey the thematic element of ‘unexpectedness, novelty, originality,’ which is in fact inherent already in the opposition ‘taken for granted/fictional’ (see item 1, above).

Thus, the rule would be as follows:

(33) \textit{transition: (a) from the fictional to the real and/or (b) from the existing to the annihilated and/or (c) from the partial to the complete and/or (d) from the obvious to the original CONCR} transfer to the frame.
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3.2. All these effects seem to be present in the plot of the Babylonian “Pessimistic dialogue between Master and Servant” (see Pritchard 1969: 497–38).

(34) In each of its dozen episodes, the master orders the slave to make preparations for certain actions (to go to the court, to help a friend, etc.), listens to his arguments that the intended actions are futile, and revokes the orders. In the final episode the master, convinced of life’s futility, decides to die and gives corresponding orders, including, among other things, the death of the slave even before that of his master.

Referentially, the plot (34) is a dramatic switch from disparate and illusory life-pursuits to the ultimate truth of complete abnegation of life, especially for the slave: after having taken for granted his peripheral and thus immune role of a discussant and instrument of his master’s intended actions, he is suddenly involved “for real” by the last and deadly one—as its object. In the code sphere this is echoed by ‘transfer to the frame’; the action, which was confined to the inner story (“the master’s worldly pursuits”), in the end engulfs and destroys the frame (“the dialogue between the master and the slave”), that is, all the characters of either story.

If in the “Dialogue” the referential sphere claims, roughly speaking, the entire iconic potential of the ‘transfer to the frame’, in other cases it can bring out only some of the thematic elements listed in rule (33).

3.3. Mandel’stam’s poem Ja p’ju za voennyje astry . . . (“I drink to the military asters . . .”) (see Mandel’stam 1967, 1: 165–66) is written in the form of a toast—to objects and values treasured by but inaccessible to the speaker (“St. Petersburg days,” “Paris paintings,” “Champs Elysées,” “Rolls-Royce,” “Alpine cream,” etc.). In the last couplet:

(35) Ja p’ju, no ešte ne pridunat, iz duux
vybiraju odno:
Veseloe asti-Spumante ili papskogo
zanka vino . . .

I drink, but I have not yet thought
up [i.e., decided or invented], out
of the two I choose one:
The joyous “Asti-Spumante” or the
wine of “Château des Papes” . . .

it turns out, however, that the wine, a sine qua non of ‘drinking a toast’, is itself out of the speaker’s reach—just as the objects mentioned in the toast are.

The theme and plot of the poem involve ‘loss of everything’ (and, ambivalently, insistence on ‘symbolic possession of everything’). It is, therefore, the thematic elements ‘completeness’ and ‘annihilation’ (see (33 b,c)) that come to the fore in the iconic interplay of the referential story and the code-sphere ‘transfer to the frame’. The ‘annihilation’ of the frame (‘the toast’) is so much the more ‘complete’ and spectacular, because its reality has been taken for granted while what is inside it (‘the listed objects’) have been presented from the start as values, that is, merely ideas. (In other words, rules (33 b,c) are supported and reinforced by (33 a,d).)

3.4. A different component, (33a), of the overall rule—truth, reality as opposed to fiction, illusion—is highlighted in the Somali tale “A Soothsayer Tested” (see Chap. 4). The inner story is about the soothsayer’s interaction with the chief of his tribe; it is framed by the soothsayer’s exchanges with the snake. In the end it unexpectedly (see (33d)) turns out that these exchanges are subject to the same laws as those between the soothsayer and the chief. Thus a status of ‘revelation’ is conferred on the plot’s denouement. In the code sphere this effect is iconically supported by the corresponding components of (33), and also by an additional refinement of the ‘transfer to the frame’:

(36) truth = similarity between the outer story and the already known content of the inner story.

In “A Soothsayer Tested” this “similarity rule” operates in conjunction with the more usual “contiguity rule,” on which, for instance, the plot of the “Dialogue,” (34) is based (in both cases the inner and outer stories share a character: the slave; the soothsayer). The ‘transfer to the frame by contiguity’ tends to emphasize the ‘readiness, tangibility, earnestness of the truth’, while ‘transfer by similarity’ is more concerned with ‘truth’s accuracy’. Consider the ‘transfer to the frame by (almost) pure similarity’ in Hamlet’s “mousetrap”: the enacted play resembles the hypothesis he is testing for accuracy, but none of the actors takes part in the subsequent action. The contiguous impact is confined to the King and Queen’s leaving the audience (Hamlet, III, 2).

4. Conclusion

The examples of ‘transfer to the frame’, which expresses the ‘truth’ of artistic invention, bring us back, in a sense, to those examined at
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the beginning of the chapter and with them I will round off my series of illustrations.

In analyzing the examples I tried throughout to outline the corresponding rules of code-sphere concretization, and it is in these that the theoretical purport of the discussion resides. The complete set of such rules, together with a similar catalogue of referential sphere concepts, would form the “lexicon” component of the PE model of literary competence; this “lexicon, or dictionary, of reality” is indispensable for the functioning of the other major component of the model, a “grammar” made up of expressive devices (see Glossary).

The compilation of such a dictionary would of course be a superhuman task. To a certain extent it might be facilitated by an eventual generalization of the rules. First, it would be sufficient to state the primary correspondences (of the type: ‘boundary’ → ‘pause’; ‘something taken for granted’ → ‘frame’; etc.); from these one could derive more complex ones (like rules (20) and (21)), which I have preferred to write out in full as separate items. Second, even these primary correspondences are, in principle, reducible to still more elementary data, namely, to the definitions of code-sphere units: thus, the definition of ‘pause’ should of necessity include the property of ‘being a boundary’. Yet, such generalization of the rules will hardly exempt scholars from the preliminary task of empirically listing the rules of iconic code concretization of thematic elements.

12

On the Preparation of the Final Rhyming Word: PRESAGE and Recoil in Rhyming

The theoretical apparatus of this chapter has been called forth by a strictly descriptive problem—the artistic riddle presented by the last word of a Pushkin lyric. My hypothesis was that this rhyme, along with many others, owed its effect to the way it was prepared for throughout the entire stanza and thus emphasized as an unexpected and natural closure. Once seen as a preparation of a result, the structure warranted recourse to concepts devised for similar plot techniques. In terms of poetics of expressiveness, the relevant devices are PRESAGE and Recoil, that is, respectively a “direct” and a “reverse” preparation (see Glossary).

1. PRESAGES

1.1. Some Concepts

It has been noted that the word concluding a poem, a stanza, a couplet, or an important line often “clicks neatly into place.”

(1) We cannot fight for love, as men may do (R1);
We should be woo’d (PreR2), and were not made to woo (R2).

This chapter is a considerably modified version of [1979d]. A number of Russian examples have been replaced by English counterparts and the exposition has been changed. For more Russian material and some of the theoretical points omitted here, see [1979d].
Notes

'show through' here, whereas the 'altruistic self-denial' plays the role of the 'restraining veil or shroud', expressed iconically by the oblique constructions.

19. In PE terms, such 'poetic uniqueness' is accounted for by the simple fact that there is strictly one ready-made object capable of covering the given set of expressive functions, and hence only one — unique — artistic solution (cf. Chap. 6, beginning of § 5).

Chapter 10. Comparing Poetic Worlds


2. On various correlations between Olé and Ómne, in particular, on their neutralization, see [1976c: 39; 1977b: 91ff.] and Chap. 3, § 5.

3. Past 1 is I2 suver'ya ("Out of superstition"), Past 2, Nikogo ne budet v dome ... ("There will be no one in the house ... "); Ok 1, Mne nado na kogo-nibud' moli'sya ... ("I must worship somebody ... "); Ok 2, T'nozu zdes' vse zhanaseleno ... ("Everything here is curtailed with darkness ... ").

4. To my knowledge, so far this has passed unnoticed by students of Russian poetry.

5. Pasternak, as a translator of Shakespeare and other Western poets, was always interested in the principle of free interpretation. He begins his poem portraying a fellow poet ("To Anna Akhmatova") with the following declaration: "It seems to me, that I will pick the words / Similar to your primordial / But if I make a mistake, I don't care two straws about it. / All the same I won't part with the mistake." (Akhmatova's portrayal of Pasternak's PW [see Chap. 9, § 1] is, on the contrary, very accurate.)

6. In part — because, as we recall from § 4, common details can also derive, in different authors, from different motifs and themes. In nonintertextual cases it is even theoretically possible that similar text elements will involve no common elements at the level of themes, i.e., that they can be fully accounted for by the respective different central themes. In intertexts, however, a common element is always provided by Ólp, which reflects the fact of one poet's commenting on another.

7. A linguistic analogy to different derivations of similar motifs is, of course, the derivation of homonymous sentences from different deep structures in generative grammar (the classic example is They are flying planes). In that case the intertextual replacement of derivations can be likened to the clash of two possible readings of a sentence in a pun.

8. In terms of the Class 1 — Class 2 dichotomy intertextual themes like (34), of course, come under the latter heading: they are "about literature" rather than "about life." They could, however, form a class by themselves, if a more detailed, dichotomous division were to be set up: Class 1 themes — "referential" messages about life; Class II themes — "code-oriented" messages about linguistic and literary competence and conventions; Class III themes — "intertextual" messages about other texts (see [1982c]).

Chapter 11. How to Show Things with Words: On the Iconic Representation of Themes by Expression-Plane Means

1. In other words, we have to do here with what we call conocr via EDs (in this case, via repetition), see Introduction, Glossary, and also [1974a: 19ff.; 1976b: 22ff.]; for the iconic correspondence between repetition and monotonous cf. note 13.

2. A more refined instance of a similar code sphere conocr of 'only' can be observed in Afanas' Fet's lyric Tol'ko v mire i est' eto tenisnye ... ("In the entire world there is only the shadow ... ") with its theme 'for the poet in the whole world there exists only his beloved'. In fact, four out of the eight lines almost verbatim repeat the first; there are only two different rhymes; the rhythmical, phonic, etc., effects are deliberately monotonous; the space described is enclosed. (These considerations were prompted by M. L. Gasparyov's oral discussion of the poem.) Cf. also Pasternak's poem Nikogo ne budet v dome ... ("There'll be no one in the house ... ") in which a similar code-sphere conocr of 'only' is evident in the lines: Tol'ko kryly, sneg i kornei i snega, — nikogo 'Only the roofs, the snow and besides / The roofs and the snow no one'.

3. Note how this theme and a fairly moderate treatment of the form of limerick in (5), differ from the extremist theme and design of Ben Jonson's text (2): in (5) the form is preserved, in (2), destroyed.

4. Formula (4) consists exclusively of the elements expressed iconically (see items 1 — 7, preceding the formula) and arranged in an intuitively plausible way. In fact, this formula is not the theme, i.e., the most general thematic invariant, of text (5), but rather a paraphrase of its deep poetic structure.

5. I have in mind here the twofold orientation of poetic language toward both (a) destruction of the automatized conventional relation between the signifier and the signified (Shklovsky 1965; Jakobson 1973a: 208) and (b) restoration of similarity between the two, which compensates for the arbitrariness of the relation (Genette 1968: 150). For an interesting comparison of the two principles and the respective definitions of the poetic function see Smirnov 1977: 23 — 24.

6. The discussion in § 1.2 is partly prompted by Etkind 1970: 177. Note the similarity of (8a) and (3), where the theme 'only' is expressed by filling three lines with repetitions of one and the same word (cf. note 2). Characteristically enough, rule (8b) is especially active in the last line of the stanza (Onstaved 'Stopped' marks the final stop); correspondingly, in the third line (Zagorodil 'Blocked'), it is rule (8a) that comes to the fore. To hazard a tempting guess, I suggest that the very application of rule (8) to the shorter lines in the stanza also has a thematic function: 'blocking the gorge at its narrowest point (in a "right
place between the cliffs") CONCR one word takes up an entire short line (there being longer lines in the stanza). This calligram stands out quite clearly on a printed page owing to the central position of the shorter lines, so that the stanza presents an iconic image of an archetypal gorge narrowing down toward its base.

9. Incidentally, of all the eight hemistichs only one other exhibits the properties 1 and 2, namely prazdniy denik drevny pok, where, however, the overall thematic-expressive situation is altogether different.
10. Both the summative patter and the effects of 'dynamization by stretching' and 'containment by shrinking' (which are mentioned in item 2) occur also in "I loved you once . . .", the former in line 6, the latter in lines 5 and 7; see Chap. 9.
11. Cf. the basically identical role played by phonetic similarity in Pasternak's lines from Ballada ("The ballad"), . . . hak budo čto obrel; Ôryby denis obiroya . . . as if [he] had acquired something. Having comb the cliffs down [to the bottom], where "the transmission, along the fragment, of the cluster ob-r corresponds to the identity of the movement's subject, water" [1980: 296]. One is further tempted to suggest that the absence of stress in the cluster ur-n in the word uron, as well as its discontinuity, function as an iconic CONCR of the 'disintegration of the broken urn'.
12. For more detail see [1974a: 22]. Curiously enough, Pushkin's fairly precise translation (Dobryj svet ["Good advice"], 2: 129; see Etkin 1973: 207f.) ignores the code-sphere construction under consideration: Parry's thirteen-line poem is translated by three quatrains and throughout the rhyming is abab instead of aabb.
13. Themes other than 'postponing the end', too, can well be expressed by adding 'extra' lines with the same rhyme, for instance, 'monotony, absence of change'. Cf. Zinaida Gippius's eighteen-line poem Odnobraz ("Monotony") (1855), which contains only two different rhymes arranged in the following way: AABAAABAAABAAABAAAAB. First, a rhyming pattern is established: to one masculine rhyme correspond two feminine feminine rhymes (conveying 'monotony'); then an extra feminine rhyme and finally two extra feminine rhymes are added ('the monotony increases'). Furthermore, it is in these same 'extra' lines that the 'monotony' is directly CONCRETIZED in the referential sphere as well: the twelfth line reads: O, esti by zot' ten' divižen'ja 'Oh, if there were at least a shadow of movement!'; the seventeenth reads: I ve nauček bez izmenen'ja 'And everything forever without change'. A similar theme is expressed in much the same way in Pasternak's Vesyokaja bolezn' ("The lofty malady"): there are several long sequences that contain only two or three different rhymes—a device laid bare by the poet (Eliët mudnaj šem vifny ęt . . . 'More boring still than these rhymes . . .'). Note the natural affinity between sequences of identical rhymes expressing 'monotony' and code-sphere CONCR of 'only, nothing except' (cf. note 9).

14. The fact that the whole of the second line is occupied lends the 'continuation' a certain stability, cf. rule (8) and comment 8 on (3), which also involve the 'filling of a whole'; by way of contrast, cf. rule (26).
15. Zameshčote'nica is applied by Ju. Lotman (1968); for my comments on his analysis and on the poem itself see [1978d: 490–91].
16. Cf. § 1.3 (comment 2). A comb of 'relax with reaching over a boundary' is also attested in the fragment mentioned in note 11, as well as in Zameshčote'nica (where the rhyme in -dēt is carried over from the first stanza into the second).
17. Rule (28) is a particular case of rule (21): the identity of an object is in both rules CONCRETIZED through the continuation of one and the same sentence, and in rule (28) it is additionally CONCRETIZED through phonetic similarity.
18. This expressive pattern is a particular case of variation through all; see Glossary and [1977a: 139–43]; cf. also Chap. 5, note 9.
19. For a detailed analysis of the poem see [1979i]. As regards the 'transfer's potential for expressing 'complete annihilation', it is a typical function of this construction in jokes. Cf.

Kosiyan proposes to Brezhnev to permit Jews to emigrate. Brezhnev objects: "First we let the Jews go, then the Tatars will apply, after them others, and before long the two of us will be left." Kosiyan: "You speak for yourself. I won't be left here with you, I'll go too."

Especially remarkable is the way 'completeness' is stressed by the 'transfer'. The underlying rule 'all' CONCR, 'even X' CONCR 'something taken for granted' CONCR 'part of the frame' is based on frame's being taken for granted (see (93a)) and on the expressive construction CONTRAST of the "even X" type [1976a: 40, 41]. The resulting code-sphere expression of the theme ('everything, even the frame') echoes its referential counterpart ('everybody, even the rulers').

Chapter 12. On the Preparation of the Final Rhyming Word: PREEACE AND RECOIL in Rhyming

1. "Dynamic" orientation toward a final result, a closure, is a constitutive feature of the material under discussion. This approach is alien to Russian academic tradition (cf. Žirmunskij 1975: 235–432), which sees such patterns as nondirected alliterations. The two exceptions I know are Štokmar (1958), who, however, assumes that the patterns he so thoroughly describes are the invention of Mayakovskij, and Saljamon (1971), who devotes himself exclusively to one type of phonetic foreshadowings. In Western poetics recent interest in closure produced such major contributions as Hymes 1960, with its concept of "statistically summative" words, Masson 1976, and Smith 1968