THE LANGUAGE OF AMERICAN POETRY,
1900-1910

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Pol: What do you read, my lord?

Ham: Words, words, words.

Or un écrivain, un poète, un philosophe, un homme des régions intellectuelles n'a qu'une patrie: sa langue.

--Remy de Gourmont
# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I. Backgrounds in Theory</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>II. The Available Past</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>III. The Conservatives: Woodberry, Sterling, Santayana</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IV. The Transition: Moody, Lodge, Stickney</td>
<td>138</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V. A New Language: Robinson and Pound</td>
<td>196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VI. Other Voices</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VII. A Note on Poetic Language After 1910</td>
<td>270</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NOTES</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WORKS CITED</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
INTRODUCTION

"Why do you want to write poetry?" If the young man answers: "I have important things I want to say," then he is not a poet. If he answers: "I like hanging around words listening to what they say," then maybe he is going to be a poet. 1

Auden's remark is not without its touch of whimsy, but as a characteristic modern attitude it is unmistakably clear. Both scholarship and criticism (to make a familiar and convenient, if not altogether real distinction) have turned increasingly in our time to a consideration of the poem as linguistic object. This tendency is in part a literary extension of the modern preoccupation with linguistics and semantics, which in turn are an extension of such scientific disciplines as sociology, physiology, and physics. It has roots in the literary past as well, for it can be seen as a reaction against what was felt to be a tradition of linguistic indifference in poetic theory and practice of the nineteenth century. What is significant for our purposes here is that the study of poetry can no longer be maintained apart from the study of language. And at this point we begin.

This work aspires neither to the documentary thoroughness of Spitzer or Richards or Josephine Miles, nor to the originality of Bateson or Cleanth Brooks or Empson. I pro-
pose here no more than a small, but definite, addition to the same field of knowledge which these writers (and several distinguished others) have contributed so greatly to. Specifically, my task has been an examination of the use of language in American poetry during the decade between 1900 and 1910. In scope this examination is broad and general, a survey rather than an exhaustive tabulation. The main portion is concerned with eight poets whose work seems to me to represent rather accurately the full range of achievement during that decade, and to span the extremes of language practice as viewed historically. The first two chapters provide a background in nineteenth-century theory and practice of poetic language. The final chapters discuss briefly other work in the period and summarize trends in language theory and practice after 1910.

Several basic assumptions must be mentioned. First is my belief that the language theories and practices of Romanticism were the only historically significant ones of the nineteenth century and that they held a firm grip on the literary mind for well over a century, into the twentieth. This assumption has several effects. One is that I have not attempted to distinguish between Romantic and Victorian poetry; for my purposes, the division is arbitrary and unimportant. Another consequence is that my study of origins in Chapter One had to be carried back an entire century, rather longer than most background studies. A
second, and related, assumption is that British precept and example dominated American poetry of the nineteenth century (which does not, however, mean that American poetry was only an imitation of British). Hence in the background chapters I have drawn freely from British sources and in later chapters continue to make English poetry as much a point of reference as American.

The historical approach involves certain beliefs about poetry and language that may not be held by all readers. The first, of course, is simply a belief that poetic tradition exists—that poets sharing a common language also share, through the passage of time, certain common methods of using that language. Geoffrey Bullough's statement that "changes in poetic technique are due not merely to individual genius in contact with a resistant medium, but also to changes in the social and intellectual environment" seems applicable here. Nor do I by any means suggest that the historical method is the only adequate discipline for studying poetry; it is merely the one I have chosen as best for the present material. Its choice, in any event, creates a limitation: the historical critic must trace the literary mainstream; he cannot be overly concerned with unique individual achievements which often transcend the tradition but do not immediately affect it. A corollary to this belief in poetic tradition is the concept of the cycle: the idea that a new tradition, arising
out of the immediate past, undergoes an organic process of growth, maturity, and decline. In this dissertation, I maintain consistently a belief that by the beginning of the twentieth century the Romantic tradition of poetic language had reached an advanced stage of decline, that it was no longer a stimulating, fruitful tradition, and that from its senescence was beginning to arise a new set of theories and practices which would contribute to the forming of a new poetic manner. Hence I have, more often than not, used the terms Romantic and Romanticism in a pejorative sense; and I must advise the reader that I am by no means insensitive to the great poems written in Romanticism's prime. Numerous brief comments throughout the dissertation will support this claim. That I also believe certain features of Romantic language to have been inherently faulty will be made clear elsewhere. The matters discussed in this paragraph are elementary, I am aware; but they are also axiomatic and thus demand to be stated.

Chapter One attempts to demonstrate certain principles which become guiding assumptions through the rest of the dissertation. One is that a powerful element of Romantic literary theory believed poetry to have its source in inspiration and its highest purpose in the expression of moral idealism. The proper tone of poetry was thought to be emotional; hence a language of strong affective connotations came to be sanctioned. Since the doctrine of
inspiration was essentially hostile to any serious notions of craftsmanship, this already indefinite language of connotation gradually became even more vague (as well as more conventional) by reason of indifference to careful word choice and sentence structure. But within the complex scope of Romanticism were views contradictory to these. One championed a deliberate return to plain, colloquial speech; another favored a language strongly concrete; another held forth for a language of auditory beauty. All three were concerned, in any case, with the poet's careful attention to language.

The second chapter attempts to outline the practical results of Romantic language theory. Four modes of poetry are isolated, defined, and analyzed in some detail. I have named these the emotional mode, the euphonic mode, the concreative mode, and the idiomatic mode. They are intended to be not water-tight compartments, but conveniently loose groupings. I have sought to demonstrate with poems which seem to me typical of these modes; the conclusions I reach about any poem do not extend generally to the entire work of its author. An important assumption at this point is that the four Romantic modes, with emotionalism dominant, continued to form the basis of most poetic practice in the decade 1900-1910 and beyond. Since these four modes are constant points of reference throughout the dissertation, I have found it advisable to demonstrate
them in rather copious detail. My separation of theory from practice in the first two chapters, incidentally, was made for convenience in handling two large bodies of data; I hope to have made clear the fact of their interdependence.

The third, fourth, and fifth chapters are the core of my study. In them I have made a detailed examination, according to principles set forth in Chapters One and Two, of eight poets who wrote non-dramatic verse during the decade 1900-1910. These I have grouped under historical labels, placing George Edward Woodberry, George Sterling, and George Santayana in the category of "conservatives"; William Vaughn Moody, George Cabot Lodge, and Trumbull Stickney in the category of "transitionals"; L. A. Robinson and Ezra Pound in that of "new poets." With each poet I have followed this procedure: brief, relevant biographical data by way of introduction; the poet's views of language; his practice of metric, especially as it relates to the euphonic mode; his vocabulary and syntax; his imagery and its place within the concretive mode; relevance of his work to the idiomatic mode, whenever the relationship is not sufficiently indicated through vocabulary and syntax.

Customarily a study of vocabulary may be handled in one of two ways: the scholarly method of extensive tabulation (like Josephine Miles' extensive work) or the impressionistic method of general comment and occasional
illustration (George Rylands' *Words and Poetry* is typical). My method has been to strike a balance between what I feel are equally unsatisfactory extremes by citing selective word lists (which give the characteristic "flavor" of each poet's vocabulary), then discussing these lists in the light of Romantic theory. No one is more conscious than I of the compromise involved here. Few words in poetry can ever be studied properly out of their context, but the problem of how a poet's vocabulary can be determined by any other means I leave to some more ingenious critic. The reader must simply take it on faith that I have read carefully and many times all the poetry mentioned in this dissertation, and that I have sufficient powers of judgment to select word lists which will be, roughly at least, representative. With the other features of language I have been able to work almost entirely through longer passages, since general patterns of metric, syntax, imagery, and idiomatic language can be demonstrated more successfully in context.

The final chapters are intended to be no more than brief notes giving completeness to the study. Chapter Six attempts to round out my examination of the period from 1900 to 1910 by a series of short comments on other poets who wrote during the decade, with special attention to those who would figure importantly in the "poetic renaissance" of 1912 and after. Chapter Seven summarizes, again
very briefly, the trends in poetic language after 1910. My emphasis here has necessarily, for reasons of space limitation, rested on theory. To demonstrate even summarily all the varied experiments to which poetic language has been submitted since 1910 would be a task beyond the scope of this dissertation. I have, however, made an effort to account for the fate of Romantic language practices in the modern period.

There remains a question: in what sense is this work a linguistic study? Certainly not in the ordinary sense is it a linguistic analysis. For one thing, it does not observe the standard categories: phonetics, morphology, grammar, syntax, and lexicon. For another, it contains rather little explication, and in fact rarely dwells at length on single words and phrases. With semantics it has no more than incidental relations. My purpose at all times has been to emphasize literary values; and I hope that I have been successful in my attempt to fuse linguistic disciplines with critical methods. Perhaps my strongest link with linguistics is in the historical approach I have used. This carries with it the important notion that poetic language, despite whatever personal uses the poet puts it to, exists in time and as such is subject to the same process of growth and decay as all other temporal matter. These "personal uses" of the poet, I am aware, also influence the general language to some extent, but such matters lie
outside the scope of this study.

The texts on which I have based my examination are too numerous to be listed anywhere but in the bibliography. Generally, however, I have observed the following practices. With the eight "major" poets I have worked almost entirely from books published between the inclusive dates of 1900 and 1910. Exceptions to this have been noted in the appropriate places. In the matter of revised texts, I have used the latest version before 1911. The whole problem of later revision has forced me in several cases to cite from a poet's early editions, rather than from his more easily available popular collections. In the second chapter, however, where the poets are mostly established figures and where exact dates are not so important, I have tried to cite from the most easily available edition (usually the Oxford student edition). In Chapter Six, most of the poems are from periodicals, since many of the poets discussed there had not yet published a book of verse by 1910.
Chapter One

BACKGROUNDs IN THEORY

1.

The belief that modern English and American poets have made a total break with their nineteenth-century predecessors is a truism widely accepted at certain levels of literary seriousness. It is neither the main nor the incidental purpose of these chapters to explode that commonplace, since no serious scholar accepts it anyway. But since this study deals with language, one of the elements of poetry which seems to have changed greatly between this century and the last, it seems necessary to demonstrate the marked continuity of poetic language, both in theory and practice, from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the present.

Literary history abounds in situations, both individual and group, where child disowns parent in the struggle for maturity. Every new age casts off its ancestors, or it would not be a new age. Carrying the analogy further, I should like to suggest that common confusion in the case under examination arises from the failure to recognize that while one parent was driven off, the other remained. Or, to be explicit, that there were two streams of thought regarding the nature of poetry in the nineteenth century,
two sets of attitudes that grew increasingly farther apart as the century progressed until it was finally impossible to retain both. One had to go—and did go.

These two attitudes I should like to designate as Craft and Anti-Craft: the belief that poetry should be primarily concerned with technique, and the counter-belief that poetry was largely a matter of inspired expression to which more than a nominal application of technique would be crippling. All this, of course, is subject to the usual qualifications: neither attitude existed in pure form; neither was followed consistently by either the individual poet or the individual critic; and the one which finally gained ascendancy has not to this day completely routed the other. What makes the examination of these ideas even more difficult is the fact that in their early stages they had not yet developed into mutually repellant doctrines; consequently both will sometimes be found not only in the same writer, but in the same critical essay and even in the same poem. Especially with Wordsworth, one of the fountainheads of nineteenth-century poetic theory, does the task of making distinctions become difficult.

The source of the Romantic revolt was a dissatisfaction with the poetry of the preceding generation. Both Craft and Anti-Craft had in common a dislike for eighteenth-century poetry and in particular a dislike for its language. How each went about correcting the deficiencies of
this language provides the basis for most of this chapter and the next.

The eighteenth century had two modes of poetry. The earlier, which had reached various points of perfection in the work of Dryden and Pope, is commonly termed Neo-classic. Its dominant metrical form was the end-stopped pentameter couplet; its chief subject matter was satiric or didactic; and its language was a literary modification of the precise, rational, denotative speech idiom of cultivated men, combined with a fairly narrow stock of words which it called "poetic diction" and which it applied more or less regularly, in the manner of the Homeric fixed epithet, to compensate for the emotional bareness of the basic vocabulary. The structure of poems in the neoclassic mode was logical, much like the structure of prose.

The other mode, which arose early in the century and came to a certain perfection during the second and third quarters of the century, is called by F. W. Bateson "Baroque." Chiefly a poetry of sensibility, apparently a reaction against the emotional poverty of the neoclassic, it neglected the couplet for such irregular forms as the ode and largely forsook the precise, denotative language which formed the basis for neoclassic, without freeing itself to any measurable extent from the other element of neoclassic language, the "poetic diction." This poetry aimed at "sublimity," an ambiguous term which in this case
might be defined as a state of exalted calm attained through the accumulative effect of emotional statements in dignified language. This concern with sublimity seems to account for its retention of neoclassic "poetic diction."

The structure of Baroque was cumulative, a rapid piling-up of effect on effect. Its main poets were Young, Collins, Thomson, and Gray.

The latter formulated its views about poetic language in a frequently-quoted remark: "As to matter of stile, I have this to say: The language of the age is never the language of poetry; except among the French....Our poetry, on the contrary, has a language peculiar to itself." The attitude toward language which underlay this position can be found in two other remarks of Gray, one that "the English tongue...is too diffuse, & daily grows more & more enervate" and another that "to poetry languages owe their first formation, elegance, and purity; that our own, which was naturally rough and barren, borrowed from thence its copiousness and its ornaments; and that the authority of such a poet may perhaps redress many of the abuses which time and ill custom have introduced."

Essentially, then, the attitude of the Baroque poets toward language was that it had become inadequate, in its natural state, for poetry; that consequently poets had the duty of creating a poetic diction superior in "elegance and purity" to both the spoken language and the language
of prose. While the second of these beliefs—the notion of the poet's obligation to language—would not be overthrown by Romanticism, the first was to be strongly contested by Wordsworth; and the whole concept of a deliberately induced poetic diction would be denigrated by Romantic poets and critics for nearly a century, indeed long after some of these poets had unwittingly come full circle in avoiding eighteenth-century poetic diction, to the creation of a new, Romantic, poetic diction.

2.

That the repercussions of Wordsworth's celebrated 1800 Preface to the *Lyrical Ballads* have not yet altogether ceased is as good an indication as any that its ideas on language were not only novel but so completely revolutionary that a century and a half of almost constant poetic experiment has not yet been altogether able to absorb them. When Wordsworth proposed to write serious poetry "in the language really used by men" and when he affirmed, moreover, his belief that "such language...is a more permanent, and a far more philosophical language, than that which is frequently substituted for it by Poets," he not only placed before the world a theory essentially new in the history of English poetry and so vastly different from what had been that he himself (as Coleridge was but the first to
point out) could not successfully practice it with any regularity; but he also loosed upon poetic practice, by his franchisement of a large new vocabulary, effects that he certainly never would have foretold—and indeed, never could have approved.

Wordsworth’s theory of language was out of joint with several other equally powerful influences in Romanticism, some of which are apparent in his own work and resulted in much inconsistency between his theory and his practice. For one thing, the vast area of emotionalism which the Romantics were prepared to explore could not be easily accommodated by the language that Wordsworth recommended for poetry. For another, the renewed interest in exotic and antique subjects would likewise be hindered by the limits of the spoken idiom. Finally, the directness and concreteness of such a language as Wordsworth proposed would prove a fatal hindrance to any complex intellectual poetry and particularly (as he himself was to discover) to any expression of mysticism.

The practical effect of Wordsworth’s decree must not be underestimated, however. What apparently counted to the generation of poets who followed him was his forceful clearing away of the Augustan authority in language, the notion that poetic vocabulary must be special, or narrow, or denotative—or in fact, that it must be anything apart from what the individual poet conceives it to be. Words—
worth, in brief, signed a blank check for his age in the matter of poetic diction. The result was an era (to continue the metaphor) of unprecedented linguistic spending that soon brought about inflation, culminating in the bankruptcy of poetic language. This insolvency was inherited early in the twentieth century by Americans like Robinson, Pound, Eliot, and Frost—who had to discharge the debt by hard labor: painstaking accuracy in usage, a thorough weeding-out of devalued diction, and the invention of new forms. The problem had come to a head earlier in England. Hopkins was the first to cope with it successfully, followed (in various modes) by Hardy, Housman, Kipling, and Henley.

One should not place the blame for the language excesses of nineteenth-century poetry on Wordsworth's shoulders. His misfortune in this regard was to have generated an idea so powerful and simple that it would, through misuse, lose both its power and its simplicity, so that poets who owed most to Wordsworth could often not even recognize their debt to him and could revile his theory with complete sincerity.

Coleridge was the first to recognize both the immediate and the ultimate danger of the theory. A sizeable part of the Biographia Literaria is devoted to qualifications and implicit warnings about it. But Coleridge had nothing so positive to offer in the way of a substitute:
he was less a practicing poet grappling with practical difficulties of the craft than an esthetician, deeply absorbed in the creative process and hence concerned less with words per se than with the relation of the entire poetic process to the human imagination. But even though his strictures on Wordsworth were mostly negative, he did make certain very important contributions to the theory of poetic technique, some of which have not been properly appreciated until our own time. One was a belief in the doctrine of organic form, which had its own independent American development in Emerson and Whitman. Coleridge said:

I learned from [the classics master at Christ's Hospital] that poetry, even of the loftiest and, seemingly, that of the wildest odes, had a logic of its own, the same as that of science; and more difficult, because more subtle, more complex, and dependent on more and more fugitive causes. In the truly great poets, he would say, there is a reason assignable, not only for every word, but for the position of every word."

Coleridge failed to agree with Wordsworth that "there neither is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition." Having observed the limitations of "the language of real men," Coleridge held forth for a poetic diction, though he did not define it. He agreed with Wordsworth on the necessity for concreteness; he criticized his own juvenilia for "a general turgidness of diction...partly owing to...the
desire of giving a poetic colouring to abstract and metaphysical truths." But he went further. The real antithesis of poetry, he maintained, was not prose but science, an idea which Poe was later to echo on this side of the Atlantic. What such an idea meant to poetry was that precision and denotation would be loosened even more, since these qualities in language were eminently scientific ones. At best this looseness helped to make emotion and suggestion more available to the poem; at worst it produced obscurity and vagueness, which impeded clear communication. But one finds evidence that such a vagueness was desirable to the Romantics. Poe summarized this whole matter:

A poem, in my opinion, is opposed to a work of science by having for its immediate object, pleasure, not truth; to romance, by having for its object an indefinite instead of a definite pleasure, being a poem only so far as this object is attained; romance presenting perceptible images with definite, poetry with indefinite sensations, to which end music is an essential, since the comprehension of sweet sound is one most indefinite conception. Music, when combined with a pleasurable idea, is poetry; music without the idea is simply music; the idea without the music is prose from its very definitiveness. 

He spoke further on it in "The Poetic Principle":

In enforcing a truth we need severity rather than efflorescence of language. We must be simple, precise, terse. We must be cool, calm, unimpassioned. In a word, we must be in that mood, which, as nearly as possible, is the exact converse of the poetical.
From another point of view, this whole matter of a deliberately vague poetic language can be thought of as a continuation of the eighteenth-century Baroque mode. There, too, the intention seems to have been an evocation of "indefinite sensations," an exploitation of sensibility through the use of emotionally potent vocabulary and syntax. But the available language of poets like Gray, Thomson, and Collins was still too precise an instrument of rationality to allow the degree of emotional freedom that Romantic poetry finally enjoyed.

Hence at the outset there was a conflict in views: Wordsworth insisted on a clear, concrete, simple language; Coleridge (at least by implication) and Poe proposed a cloudy, musical, suggestion-laden language. Each mode was to have an active existence through the century and into the next, though the influence of each was to shift considerably from time to time.

Poe, being neither a philosophic poet like Wordsworth nor an esthetician like Coleridge, centered his critical attention almost entirely on matters of poetic technique. His obsession for the well-made poem led him to a position much further to the literary left than either of the other two, for he insisted that the making of the poem was primary, its subject matter secondary. In "The Philosophy of Composition" he even undertook to demonstrate how a poem was written, an act which must have appalled most
good Romantics; and in "The Poetic Principle" he launched an attack on the "heresy of the Didactic":

I would define, in brief, the Poetry of words as The Rhythmical Creation of Beauty. Its sole arbiter is Taste. With the Intellect or with the Conscience, it has only collateral relations. Unless incidentally, it has no concern whatever either with Duty or with Truth.12

There would be echoes of this view among Romantics, especially on the British side of the Atlantic; but few of them were prepared to go Poe's limit in more than theory until the time of Swinburne and the Pre-Raphaelites.

What all three--Wordsworth, Coleridge, Poe--had in common was a belief in the importance of technique, a conviction (demonstrated by each in their poems) that the best poets will seriously entertain notions of style. Their own theories, though diverse and often incompatible with one another, provide the basis for most practical poetic theory in the nineteenth century. In general, the proponents of technique set in motion three tendencies that were to struggle with opposing, or inspirationalist, tendencies for the entire century.

One may be called the drive toward concretion. It begins with Wordsworth's statement: "I have at all times endeavoured to look steadily at my subject" and his claim for the Lyrical Ballads that "personifications of abstract ideas rarely occur in these volumes, and are
utterly rejected as an ordinary device to elevate the style and raise it above prose. These statements indicate an attempt to use language so that precise and vivid images would illuminate the poem—partly in the interest of a greater realism, partly in an effort to expand the subjective capacity of the poem, and partly from the realization that poetry in the eighteenth century had lost much of its sensuousness, its kinship with the visual arts.

We hear Emerson, who normally found attention to technique incompatible with the highest expression, very closely coinciding with Wordsworth in this matter of concretion. After discussing the popular Romantic notion (and one directly opposed to Gray's) that primitive language is, by its directness and concreteness, very close to poetry but that it deliquesces as civilization progresses and men become concerned with abstractions, Emerson stated:

\begin{quote}
But wise men pierce this rotten diction and fasten words again to visible things; so that picturesque language is at once a commanding certificate that he who employs it is a man in alliance with truth and God. The momentous discourse rises above the ground line of familiar facts and is inflamed with passion or exalted by thought, it clothes itself in images.\end{quote}

This idea had been expressed in terms almost identical by Shelley, another poet of the inspirational school, who in practice was rarely loath to use abstractions:
The language [of primitive poets] is vitally metaphorical; that is, it marks the before unapprehended relations of things and perpetuates their apprehension, until the words which represent them become, through time, signs for portions or classes of thoughts instead of pictures of integral thoughts; and then if no new poets should arise to create afresh the associations which have been thus disorganized, language will be dead to all the nobler purposes of human intercourse.¹⁶

Another of these tendencies toward a poetry of technique we may call, using a term coined by Thomas Riggs, "devaluation of the heroic."¹⁷ This trend consisted of removing the artificiality from poetry, mainly through the use of plain, concrete language and a simple syntax. Wordsworth's "language of real men" is the theoretical center here, though all during the century we may see poets in various ways attempting to combat artificiality of language: Byron, Browning, Whitman—even Lowell (in "A Fable for Critics" and the "Biglow Papers"). This practice seems to aim at the Renaissance ideal of decorum, a belief that the language of a poem must be appropriate to the emotions or ideas expressed. The Romantics charged the Augustans with insincerity, with expressing more than they felt; Wordsworth and those who followed him demonstrated for their age the fact that poetry could be both simple and dignified.

A third trend, expressed in Poe's criticism and practiced in his poetry, is the trend toward a private language.
The belief that poetry should try to emulate the absolute aural beauty of music and to dissociate itself from meaning had a profound influence on both English language poetry and French poetry. Poe's theories and practice, absorbed first by Baudelaire and later by Mallarmé and Rimbaud, would move back across the Atlantic in modified form during the twentieth century.

Poe's theory, however, was not the only one to produce a private language. A number of poets, by the middle of the century, were growing dissatisfied with the too-fluent, too-musical, too-easily-imitated poetic language which the Romantic dispensation had made possible. Poets like Browning and Meredith in England, Melville and Dickinson in America, found that to the extent one departed from conventional "poeticisms," one's poetry could become original and alive. In this mode euphony, rhythmical smoothness, and even clarity were often discarded in the greater interest of vitality. Deliberate obscurity of this kind, arising from a dislike of triteness, must be carefully distinguished from the sort of vagueness evident in much Romantic emotionalist poetry. The former, characteristically knotty and esoteric, is most of the time capable of revealing its meaning. The second is vague for vagueness' sake and cannot be penetrated because it was not meant to be.
To illustrate the technical theories of the faction I have called "Anti-Craft" very nearly involves a contradiction in terms, since it is reasonable to suppose that one does not write theory about not having any theories. But literary history tells us otherwise; writers and intellectuals being what they are, we would probably not be surprised to find somewhere a poem written to prove that poems do not exist. In any case, what we do find is that the critical writings of the Anti-Craft faction usually are concerned very little with matters of technique and very largely with matters of subject, idea, and inspiration. Moreover, as one might expect, their observations on technique are almost always negative and usually disparaging. With such a paucity of material on technique, we must often infer the writer's exact attitude toward certain matters and must more often observe his attitudes as they find expression in poetry.

Another perhaps obvious but necessary qualification must be made. Precisely speaking, the term "Anti-Craft" is a rhetorical exaggeration. All poetry that rises above the level of amateur effusion requires a certain amount of attention to technique, including the techniques of language. It is a matter here of first things; and when Romantic critics talk in hushed tones about the ecstasy
of inspiration, one must add a silent comment about poets mopping up after their own ecstasies. It must also be pointed out that absence of theory by no means precludes the existence of poetry which will pass every test of technique. Criticism has not yet been able to account for the fact that spontaneity will often accomplish what any amount of loving care cannot.

Generally, the Anti-Craft ideology centers around two principles, not always compatible with each other: one we may call the doctrine of inspiration and the other the doctrine of moral idealism. Each had a strong influence on poetic language, though the relation of the first to technique can more readily and more extensively be demonstrated. It was mentioned earlier in the chapter that Craft and Anti-Craft were not at the outset of the century mutually repellant; hence we find in Wordsworth an early Romantic expression of the doctrine of inspiration, his famous definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of...emotion recollected in tranquillity." Emerson carried the idea even further in his essay, "The Poet":

For poetry was all written before time was, and whenever we are so finely organized that we can penetrate into that region where the air is music, we hear those primal warblings and attempt to write them down, but we lose ever and anon a word or a verse and substitute something of our own, and thus miswrite the poem....
Newman affirmed the doctrine of inspiration in his essay, "Literature":

"Poeta nascitur, non fit," says the proverb; and this is in numerous instances true of his poems, as well as of himself. They are born, not framed; they are a strain rather than a composition; and their perfection is the monument, not so much of his skill as of his power.

What the doctrine of inspiration led to in practice may be considered under three categories: the dominance of emotional poetry, the disparagement of technique, and the importance of subject matter. All three situations followed inevitably, once it was affirmed that poetry arose out of inspiration.

In the Romantic lexicon inspiration meant principally emotional inspiration, or free play of the emotions—though, as Logan Pearsall Smith has shown, it was a complex "key" in this period, with a large cluster of associational meanings. The passages just cited from Emerson and Wordsworth indicate this; and Bryant's "On the Nature of Poetry" states flatly what in Wordsworth and Emerson had been only implicit:

There is no question that one principal office of poetry is to excite the imagination, but this is not its sole, nor perhaps its chief province; another of its ends is to touch the heart.... The most beautiful poetry is that which takes the strongest hold of the feelings, and, if it is really the most beautiful, then it is poetry in the highest sense.
And as late as 1893 that redoubtable belated Romantic, E. C. Stedman, attributed the decline in poetry to a deficiency of emotion:

I have referred to the lack of passion in modern poetry. The minor emotions are charmingly, if lightly, expressed. Humor is given a play almost Catullian; and that Mirth is a feeling, if not a passion, is the lyrical justification of some of our felicitous modern song.23

That the Romantic belief in a poetry of emotion did not die with the coming of the new century is attested in this passage from a 1906 North American Review article: "It is particularly the function of poetry to elevate and to touch the emotions. Poetry can never strike a low note, or become commonplace and vulgar."24 But for our purposes in this study, the much earlier statement of De Quincey is perhaps the best one, since it so clearly indicates the inspirational attitude toward language:

Now, there is not in the world so certain a guarantee for pure idiomatic diction, without tricks or affectation, as a case of genuine excitement. Real situations are always pledges of a real natural language. It is in counterfeit passion, in the mimical situations of novels, or in poems that are efforts of ingenuity and no ebullitions of absolute un-simulated feeling, that female writers endeavour to sustain their own jaded sensibility, or to reinforce the languishing interest of their readers by extravagances of language.25

That poetry should avoid affectation and insincerity is a view commonly enough accepted; but that genuine emotion
inevitably produces "pure idiomatic diction" is a corollary that few moderns could accept. As we shall see, this attitude was a favorite one with many Romantic writers.

It follows that a concept of poetry as the product of inspiration or the free operation of the emotions will be less than ordinarily concerned with matters of technique, and that this neglect of technique will probably solidify into the kind of doctrine I have earlier named Anti-Craft. Such was the case with a number of Romantic writers. I have cited Newman and De Quincey as examples. There is also Emerson's famous judgment on Poe:

For we do not speak now of men of poetical talents, or of industry and skill in metre, but of the true poet. I took part in a conversation the other day concerning a recent writer of lyrics, a man of subtle mind, whose head appeared to be a music box of delicate tunes and rhythms, and whose skill and command of language we could not sufficiently praise. But when the question arose whether he was not only a lyricist but a poet, we were obliged to confess that he is plainly a contemporary, not an eternal man....Our poets are men of talents who sing, and not the children of music. The argument [to them] is secondary, the finish of the verses is primary.

Bryant's "The Poet," written in his later years, expresses an attitude quite similar:

No smooth array of phrase,
   Artfully sought and ordered though it be,
Which the cold rhymer lays
   Upon his page with languid industry,
Can wake the listless pulse to livelier speed,
Or fill with sudden tears the eyes that read.

The secret wouldst thou know
To touch the heart or fire the blood at will?
Let thine own eyes o'erflow;
Let thy lips quiver with the passionate thrill;
Seize the great thought, ere yet its power be past,
And bind, in words, the fleet emotion fast.

Then, should thy verse appear
Halting and harsh, and all unaptly wrought,
Touch the crude line with fear,
Save in the moment of impassioned thought;
Then summon back the original glow, and mend
The strain with rapture that with fire was penned.

Stedman's remarks on technique in The Nature and Elements of Poetry demonstrate the continuity of this attitude to the end of the century:

I assume, then, that the poet's technical modes, even the general structure of a masterpiece, come by intuition, environment, reading, experience; and that too studious consideration of them may perchance retard him. I suspect that no instinctive poet bothers himself about such matters in advance; he doubtless casts his work in the form and measures that come with its thought to him, though he afterward may pick up his dropped feet or syllables at pleasure. If he ponders on the Iambic Trimeter Catalectic, or any of its kin, his case is hopeless. In fact, I never have known a natural poet who did not compose by ear, as we say; and this is no bad test of spontaneity.

Stedman's view of technique here seems to be largely restricted to prosody. Newman, one of the more outspoken inspirationalists, had said earlier about poetic language: "attention to the language for its own sake evidences not the true poet but the mere artist."
The reaction against neoclassic deliberateness, against the contrived poem with its technical skill foremost and its emotion well under control, was profound and prolonged. Yet while Romantic critics were directing some of their sharpest arrows at the poetic craftsmen, there continued to flourish a large body of poetry which was greatly concerned with technique, a poetry which had been able to compromise conscious skill with the romantic ideal of inspiration, largely by the expedient of sound. Romantic theory countenanced a musical poetry, as we have seen in Poe's and Coleridge's criticism; hence a close attention to the sound of words, through such traditional devices as rhyme, alliteration, and assonance, came to be characteristic of much poetry from Tennyson onward. Indeed, nearly the whole of Tennyson's esthetic seems to have been based on sound. His son remarked that "My father's poems were generally based on some single phrase like 'Someone had blundered' and were rolled about, so to speak, in his head, before he wrote them down." Hallam Tennyson's memoir of his father notes a multitude of comments on poets and poetry, nearly all of which are concerned with sound. This interest in the auditory value of words eventually became an obsession with certain poets, so that Swinburne, probably the greatest "music-maker" of the century, could see the excess clearly enough to parody himself. Even that painstaking stylist, Stevenson, though he could admit that words are "finite and
quite rigid," would lay great stress on "phrases that shall be musical in the mouth." What happened to this mode was that the use of language for its own musical sake eventually ruled out any intellectual depth, so that poetry soon became mere euphonious prattle. But this matter is properly a part of the next chapter.

A concern for the proper subject matter of poetry has been part of literary criticism since Aristotle. And although the Romantics did not disagree essentially with the ancient theory of a lofty and dignified subject matter for poetry (Wordsworth being the lone dissenter here, holding that lowly subjects were dignified), they did in practice extend the boundaries of subject matter considerably. Much of this new catholicity may be attributed to the force of Wordsworth and Coleridge, although the Romantic concern for things distant in time and place—an apparently endless source of new subjects—was already underway in both poetry and prose fiction. But the mere extension of subject matter is not to our point here. More important is the fact that the doctrine of inspiration, with its neglect or disparagement of technique, led almost inevitably to the attitude that content (i.e., subject matter) in a poem was of first importance. Hence we find Coleridge attributing part of the weakness of his early poems to "a wrong choice of subjects"; and Wordsworth
stating that "if the Poet's subject be judiciously chosen, it will naturally, and upon fit occasion, lead him to passions, the language of which, if selected truly and judiciously, must necessarily be dignified and variegated, and alive with metaphors and figures."\textsuperscript{35}

What became very nearly a commonplace for Romantic criticism was the idea that through inspiration, through an intense consideration of the subject, the poet would not compose, but utter. Wordsworth's qualifying phrase "selected truly and judiciously" dropped out of the pattern, and we hear Carlyle afterward saying: "Poetic creation, what is this too but seeing the thing sufficiently? The word that will describe the thing, follows of itself from such clear intense sight of the thing."\textsuperscript{36} Carrying the idea one step further, Arnold found no need to concentrate on questions of language; if the subject were well-considered, he thought, the best poetic language would emerge automatically: "The language of genuine poetry is the language of one composing with his eye on the object; its evolution is that of a thing which has been plunged in the poet's soul until it comes forth naturally and necessarily."\textsuperscript{37} Finally in Newman we find a reasoned bias against the whole question of poetic language:

But can [critics] really think that Homer, or Pindar, or Shakespeare, or Dryden, or Walter Scott, were accustomed to aim at diction for its own sake, instead of being inspired with their subject, and pouring forth beautiful words because they had beautiful
thoughts?...Rather it is the fire within
the author's breast which overflows in the
torrent of his burning, irresistible elo-
quence...and his mental attitude, and bear-
ing, the beauty of his moral countenance,
the force and keenness of his logic, are
imagined in the tenderness, or energy, or
richness of his language.

After Coleridge, Wordsworth, and Poe, a dissent to
this attitude was but rarely heard. One such dissenter
was B. P. Whipple, whose principles of poetics and poetic
language were set forth in an 1854 review of Roget's
Thesaurus. Although Whipple frowned on Wordsworth's theory
of poetic language (he called it "the perversity of a
powerful intellect"), he nevertheless bludgeoned certain
prevailing literary practices that took language for
granted:

Expression is a purely mental act, the
work of the same blended force and insight,
will and intelligence, that thinks. Its
power and clearness answer to the power
and clearness of the mind whence it pro-
cceeds. Its peculiarities correspond to the
peculiarities of the individual nature it
represents. Its perfection consists in
identifying words with things,—in bend-
ing language to the form, and pervading it
with the vitality of the thought it aims
to arrest and embody.

That this idea was not presently popular, Whipple could
affirm in plain terms:

Fill your head with words, and when you
get an idea fit it to them,—this is the
current mode, prolific in famished intel-
lects and starveling expressions. Hence the
prevailing lack of intellectual conscientiousness, or closeness of expression to the thing—a palpable interval between them being revealed at the first probe of analysis.41

But Whipple, as we shall see, was less deeply concerned with craftsmanship than with ideas; his criticism rested firmly on moral bases. And his objection to the neglect of language would be drowned out by the Romantic inspirationalists, who either, like Bryant, found that language "falls infinitely short of the mighty and diversified world of matter and mind of which it professes to be the representative,"42 or, like Whitman, were moved to ecstasies upon a mere consideration of linguistic riches to be had for the taking:

The English language befriends the grand American expression....it is brawny enough and limber and full enough. On the tough stock of a race who through all change of circumstance was never without the idea of political liberty, which is the animus of all liberty, it has attracted the terms of daintier and gayer and subtler and more elegant tongues. It is the powerful language of resistance....it is the dialect of common sense. It is the speech of the proud and melancholy races and of all who aspire. It is the chosen tongue to express growth faith self-esteem freedom justice equality friendliness amplitude prudence decision and courage. It is the medium that shall well nigh express the inexpressible.43

A second major concern of nineteenth-century criticism was the relation of ideas to poetry. This is, of course,
a perennial concern; but with the Romantics it took on special significance. True, there was much anti-intellectual sentiment in the Romantic attitude: even Coleridge and Wordsworth could object to didacticism in neoclassic poetry, condemning it as "prose thoughts translated into poetic language,"*44 but that poetry could not entertain ideas never seems to have been seriously questioned by the Romantics. It was a precise, unemotional, logical poetry of ideas that they ordinarily objected to. Bryant summed up the attitude as follows:

Remember that [poetry] does not concern itself with abstract reasonings, nor with any course of investigation that fatigues the mind. Nor is it merely didactic; but this does not prevent it from teaching truths which the mind instinctively acknowledges."*45

Earlier I have termed this Romantic concern with ideas "moral idealism." The phrase, while probably not original, is at least precise. Poetry's function was to elevate, to appeal to man's nobler side--in short, to idealize. Shelley described accurately his own intentions by the phrase "unacknowledged legislators of the world."*46

An important part of Romantic doctrine was that which gave a lofty mission to the poet, one which Arnold was to codify for his generation:

More and more mankind will discover that we have to turn to poetry to interpret life for us, to console us, to sustain us.
out poetry, our science will appear incomplete; and most of what now passes with us for religion and philosophy will be replaced by poetry.47

In poetry, as a criticism of life under the conditions fixed for such a criticism by the laws of poetic truth and poetic beauty, the spirit of our race will find, we have said, as time goes on and as other helps fail, its consolation and stay. But the consolation and stay will be of power in proportion to the power of the criticism of life.48

Poetry, according to Arnold, had the task of communicating truth to the social body. And for all practical purposes, social truth means morals. Hence we find the Romantics—and especially the American Romantics, to whom a literature of morals was very familiar indeed—interpreting the poet's obligation to the ideal in terms of morality. Bryant's remarks on didacticism quoted above continue as follows: "The elements of moral truth are few and simple, but their combinations with human actions are as innumerable and diversified as the combinations of language."49

He went on to say: "One of the great recommendations of poetry in that point of view which I am now considering it is, that it withdraws us from the despotism of many of those circumstances which mislead the moral judgment."50

The relation of moral idealism to technique is approximately the same as that of the inspirational doctrine. Again, Emerson is forthright on the subject:

For it is not metres, but a metre-making argument that makes a poem,—a thought so
passionate and alive that like the spirit of a plant or an animal it has an architecture of its own, and adorns nature with a new thing. The thought and the form are equal in the order of time, but in the order of genesis the thought is prior to the form.

Huskin could observe pointedly that "the language of the highest inspiration becomes broken, obscure, and wild in metaphor," but he was too much a Romantic not to place language secondary to idea:

But the highest thoughts are those which are least dependent on language, and the dignity of any composition, and praise to which it is entitled, are in exact proportion to its independency of language and expression.

Whipple's discussion of this matter indirectly links morality (in the aspect of moral character) to language in a manner that casts a great deal of light on nineteenth-century critical methods:

And this brings us to the consideration of words as media for the emission and transpiration of character, -- as expressions, not simply of thoughts or emotions, but of natures, -- as modes by which literature is pervaded with vitality and peopled with men, so that a criticism on styles is resolved into an exposition of persons. This function of language seems to us its noblest, because its honestest function.

Newman had implied something similar when he affirmed that literature "is the personal use of exercise of language.... the man of genius subjects it withal to his own purposes
and moulds it according to his own peculiarities.... His thought and feeling are personal, and so his language is personal. Hence we find the Romantics sanctioning a personal language, much the same as our contemporary critics.

To summarize a somewhat rambling discussion: the doctrine of moral idealism relates to poetic language in two ways. One result of an emphasis on ideas is the neglect of technique and consequently the neglect of language: the feeling that if an idea has sufficient emotional impetus, it will provide its own words. The other comes from a belief that language is an expression of personal character. This belief has two implications for poetry: one, that the language of poetry will necessarily and properly be obscure at times, since it reflects individual thought and feeling; two, that poetic language will be good or bad directly as it comes from a poet of good or bad character.

In conclusion, it must be stressed once more that the opposing doctrines of Craft and Anti-Craft, as set forth in this chapter, are rather arbitrary divisions made solely for convenience in demonstrating certain conflicting aspects of nineteenth-century poetic theory. It may be even more difficult to preserve their separate identities in the next chapter. Practice and theory seldom agree closely, even in the most placid of literary climates; and the nineteenth-century world of literature, as we all know,
was more than ordinarily stormy. In fact (and this is the real value of the division) the doctrines of Craft and Anti-Craft became mutually repellant to practicing American poets only at about the turn of the century—in other words, during the period which will be the major concern of this study. Hence the chapter which follows will attempt to demonstrate the various modes of poetic language that were available to American poets in the early twentieth century, using the theories set forth in this chapter as broad, general guides rather than as narrow laws.

4.

The determination of native American language patterns—words, idioms, syntax—in American poetry deserves far more detailed attention than this general study can give it. Nevertheless, since the relation of the American language to literature has been at times a major concern of our writers, it certainly needs at least brief attention here; and in the main chapters of language analysis, it will be discussed whenever relevant.

To nineteenth-century writers the question of whether the native idiom could be a proper medium for literature was actually but part of a larger question: can (or will) America have an indigenous literature apart from, yet of sufficient quality to compete with, English literature?
in other words, was inseparable from the greater issue of literary nationalism, which included as well the matters of American settings, themes, and ideas.

Emerson's "The American Scholar" is generally taken to be the first major document of literary nationalism, although Americans had been advocating a native literature since the middle of the eighteenth century. Bryant, writing twelve years before "The American Scholar" had been much more explicit about language than the Sage; discussing the notion that American literature would attain but slight growth because it lacked an indigenous speech, Bryant proclaimed:

It seems to me that this is one of the most insubstantial of all the brood of phantoms which have been conjured up to alarm us. Let those who press this opinion descend to particulars....Till they do this, let us be satisfied that the copious and flexible dialect we speak is as equally proper to be used at the equator as at the poles....It has grown up, as every forcible and beautiful language has done, among a simple and unlettered people; it has accommodated itself, in the first place, to the things of nature, and, as civilization advanced, to the things of art; and thus it has become a language full of picturesque forms of expression, yet fitted for the purpose of science.

Poe characteristically aligned himself on the other side of the nationalist issue, though not from any love of the British. Deeply concerned as he was with a poetry that would transcend narrow limitations of time and place, Poe made strictures on provincialism that seem less an
anti-nationalist attack than an appeal for moderation and for attention to good writing, whatever its origin:

We are becoming boisterous and arrogant in the pride of a too speedily assumed literary freedom...we get up a hue and cry about the necessity of encouraging native writers of merit—we blindly fancy that we can accomplish this by indiscriminate puffing of good, bad, and indifferent...and thus often find ourselves involved in the gross paradox of liking a stupid book the better, because, sure enough, its stupidity is American.

A few years later Lowell indirectly defended his own Americanisms in a preface to the first series of The Bigelow Papers:

The English have complained of us for coining new words....Undoubtedly we have a right to make new words as they are needed by the fresh aspects under which life presents itself here in the New World; and, indeed, wherever a language is alive, it grows. It might be questioned whether we could not establish a stronger title to the ownership of the English tongue than the mother-islanders themselves. Here, past all question, is to be its great home and center.

Longfellow implied quite a contrary attitude, when he stated that "as our character and modes of thought do not differ essentially from those of England, our literature cannot." This, the conservative view, was a powerful one through the nineteenth century, not often so explicit as above, but more often a deep, underlying assumption.
It was powerful enough when applied to language to cause a large amount of inconsistency in the poetic practice of such theoretical nationalists as Bryant, Emerson, and Thoreau. Other critics who attempted to restore popular opinion in favor of a national poetry were Rufus Griswold and Whipple, though neither of these men were much concerned with the practical linguistic problems of a national poetry.

Whitman became the first American poet to promote actively and enthusiastically the use of the native idiom in poetry. His first public utterance on the subject, in the preface to the first edition of *Leaves of Grass*, has been cited earlier in this chapter (p. 34). As Mencken observes, the American idiom was a life-long passion with Whitman. According to Mencken, Whitman once told Horace Traubel that *Leaves of Grass* was "only a language experiment—an attempt to give the spirit, the body, the man, new words, new potentialities of speech—an American...range of self-expression." Mencken quotes from an 1850 prose work (not published until 1904) in which Whitman held forth for an American style, rooted in the common speech. Even in his last years he wrote an essay, "Slang in America," defending the suitability of slang to literature and citing his own poetic use of it.

The battle for an American idiom in poetry was not won, probably, until the twentieth-century nationalist
movement, led by John Macy, Van Wyck Brooks, Mencken, and (in poetry) Harriet Monroe, was able to demonstrate conclusively by precept and example that America had a literature worthy to be compared with that of any European nation. Increasingly, however, one finds traces of the American idiom in poetry from the 1890's onward. Indeed, Robinson was one of the first to use Americanisms for serious poetry, breaking sharply away from the dialect-verse tradition of Lowell, Harte, Hay, and Riley, who used native language patterns almost always humorously or sentimentally. After the work of Frost, Sandburg, and Lindsay became known to the reading public, there was little question about the right of American words and constructions to appear in serious poetry.
Chapter Two

THE AVAILABLE PAST

1.

In theory, the whole past lies available to the poet. He can write like Chaucer, or Pope, or Longfellow, or his college roommate; he can, like the young Yeats, simultaneously imitate Shelley and Spenser. Anyone he happens to admire is fair game. Hence it would appear that the term "available past" does not admit of general application and that the only reliable studies of literary influence would be detailed individual researches—a thousand roads to Xanadu. But literary history, if it is to have meaning, must establish whatever traditional continuum, whatever uniformity of practice may exist at a specific time. Thus the historian of poetry can make generalizations and groupings, if he is careful to relate these to a continuous tradition by marshalling most of his evidence from the fairly immediate past.

The historical method in this chapter will involve the assumptions that (1) a determinable number of stylistic modes existed in nineteenth-century poetry; (2) they did, between the years 1900-1910, afford an available past to American poets, singly and in groups; (3) while these modes were practiced throughout the nineteenth century, they were
probably more influential, and are certainly better demonstrated in poems written after about mid-century; that is, within a range of time where they still comprised a live tradition.

In the foregoing chapter I pointed out that several new beliefs about poetry and poetic language arose in nineteenth-century England, principally from the criticism of Coleridge and Wordsworth—beliefs which lingered, in essence, through the entire century and were influential on both sides of the Atlantic. For the purpose of language study I grouped these beliefs roughly into two categories: Craft and Anti-Craft. From a study of the poetry which arose out of the two essentially (though not always practically) opposed doctrines, I have found it possible to isolate four dominant manners of poetic composition. These I have named the emotional mode, the euphonic mode, the mode of concentration, and the idiomatic mode. None of them, it seems hardly necessary to stress, were new to poetry; at this time the combination simply came to have new significance. Nor were they mutually exclusive. Poets moved freely from one mode to another, often combining two or three of them in a single poem.

The emotional mode comprises a large bulk of the poetry written under the dispensation of Anti-Craft: that which stems from Wordsworth's definition of poetry as "the spontaneous overflow of...emotion recollected in tranquillity."
It is a poetry of exalted utterance, even of bardic frenzy—at least in theory. In practice it might consist of either emotion as subject (the poet's or someone else's feelings) or emotion as tone (the poet's feelings about his subject). When emotions were strong, the work was usually called "poetry of passion"; when they were mild and conventional, "poetry of sentiment." The effectiveness of its language depended on associational values of words; and because it relied so heavily on a small group of emotionally potent words, this mode can be held responsible for creation of the Romantic "poetic diction" castigated by Francis Thompson as "the Praetorian cohorts of poetry, whose prescriptive aid is invoked by every aspirant to the poetical purple" and later by John Livingston Lowes as "a diction which conferred plenary absolution from the pains of thought upon poet and reader alike." The emotionalist mode, as I have indicated in Chapter One, contains some of the highest Romantic achievements. Poems of great and enduring power, like "Tintern Abbey," the "Intimations" ode, the "Ode to a Nightingale," and Poe's "To One in Paradise," have emotion as their main substance. In speaking ill of this mode, I do not wish to minimize its masterpieces, but only to emphasize its quick degeneration once it lost its necessary freshness and became an almost mechanical device.

The euphonic mode did business with both sides. Nem-
inally an "artistic" poetry, it often failed to seek the more profound relations of manner to matter; it was concerned mostly with the musical values of language sounds. Hence at one extreme it did no more than to polish, artisan-like, the technical defects arising from sheer inspiration or uncontrolled emotionalism, while at the other extreme it sank to semantic abuse, sound play, empty and facile virtuosity. In the middle balance, however, it produced some of the age's more durable poems. And, together with emotionalism, it tended to dominate the poetry of the age.

Historically speaking, the remaining two modes are more positive. They have found frequent expression in modern criticism, and they continue to animate the best poetry of our time. The mode of concretion may best be understood by considering the perennial conflict in poetry of things and ideas—the concrete and the abstract—with their cyclic reversal of roles from one age to another. The Romantics were in full revolt from the neoclassic poetry of wit and ideas; hence one practical result of Romantic theory was a concrete poetry which replaced intellectual abstractions with imagery and, at its best, treated ideas through the medium of objects. Even though this greater concretion had a healthy effect on poetry, it too suffered abuse, degenerating in some instances to rich but meaningless poetic tapestry.

The fourth mode, the idiomatic, had various manifesta—
tions in the nineteenth century; but whatever shapes it assumed, its intention was to battle the growing influence of a poetic diction which frequently suffocated fresh, new talent. The Romantics had few working principles, however, and they were not always clear as to just what "idiomatic language" in poetry meant. To Wordsworth it meant the daily speech of the Cumberland peasant; to others, especially a large number of Americans, it meant dialect speech, and the more colorful and humorous the better. To still others, it meant a personal language, freed as far as practically possible from the poetic conventions of the time—a language that might range from the merely idiosyncratic to the well-nigh incommunicable.

A convincing demonstration of any stylistic thesis must rest on close examination of texts. Accordingly, I have chosen to study in some detail a few representative poems in each of the four modes, rather than to comment discursively on the entire body of nineteenth-century English and American poetry. I have not always chosen poems or poets for their possible direct influence; instead I have attempted to find typical illustrations of each mode, wherever they might lie.

2.

Since the time of Wordsworth inspiration and emotion have been terms closely linked in the critical lexicon.
When a Romantic poet was inspired he wrote emotionally; or, more often than not, he wrote about emotion, usually his own. Josephine Miles observes in *Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion* that a number of Romantic poets were content merely to announce an emotional condition, and that the now conventional words which describe emotional states and symptoms (*gay, happy, smile, pleasure, frown, bliss, terror,* etc.) comprised the main substance of such poetry. When, as with Wordsworth, there was an organized sensibility guiding the emotional vocabulary, its effect was pristine: the words not only represented with some accuracy emotions directly felt, but the whole poem had a unity of idea which affected even syntax and sound. It often happened, however, that either the emotion was not really felt or it was not controlled (the final effect being roughly the same); consequently much emotionalist poetry suffered from a trite, inaccurate, or exaggerated vocabulary as well as a garbled syntax. F. R. Leavis has said of Shelley's worst emotional lapses:

"Being inspired was, for him, too apt to mean surrendering to a kind of hypnotic rote of favourite images, associations and words. "Inspiration," there not being an organization for it to engage...had only poetical habits to fall back on."

What happened when the Romantic poetry of emotion made an imperfect, but workable, marriage with Victorian didacticism provides an interesting topic for study. On
the far side of the Atlantic this practice can best be illustrated in Matthew Arnold, who was not only the most accomplished post-Wordsworthian but the leading poet of ideas in his generation. W. C. Brownell once remarked that Arnold's prose displayed "a sensuous side well under control," but that happy observation can hardly be said to apply to the poetry. One of Arnold's better-known poems, "The Buried Life," illustrates rather well the emotional mode at about mid-century.

Metric, first of all, deserves a word. The poem might be called a short ode: it has seven strophes of different sizes; ninety-eight iambic lines, mostly pentameter but with frequent shifts to tetrameter and trimeter; a rhyme pattern predominately of couplets but in no way regular. Beyond these few concessions to form, the poem is free to take its own course. In the emotionalist mode form was frequently a distraction; hence the simplest discipline (blank verse) or the most fluid form (the ode in one variation or another) was preferable. The influence of such a practice on language is fairly obvious: the poet freed himself from the artificiality of diction that a highly complex metric might cause; but at the same time he dispensed with the disciplines which would cause him to choose words carefully and force him to keep syntax, if not always clear, at least logical. Add to this the emotionalist poet's fondness for words in their vague, often
personal connotations; and one can envision a poetry altogether without form or clarity, commendable only for what spontaneity or sincerity it might have.

Not all of this criticism applies to "The Buried Life." It is a poem of ideas, with a reasonably well-ordered subject; that Arnold keeps the subject before us at all times is evidence that his vocabulary has not gone too far out of control. Apart from a few poetic inversions ("with tears mine eyes are wet"; "But deep enough...none ever mines"; "They would by other men be met") the syntax is direct and orderly. Sentences are fairly short: the longest is twelve lines and the average is less than five per sentence. But the poem's clarity is only apparent, for its emotions are ill-defined.

One notices the presence of favorite words: heart appears six times, breast seven times, and love (with variations like loved and beloved) six. A large collection of adjectives describes emotional states: mocking, gay, frivolous, capricious, restless, wild, forlorn, jaded. Another class of words important to this mode is what may be called the vocabulary of the indefinite. The nineteenth century delighted not so much in exploring the ineffable as merely naming it--perhaps the greatest single difference between their poetry and ours. The adjectives which follow were standard poetic equipment all through the century: nameless, elusive, lost, blank, dumb, indiscernible, un-
speakable, unexpressed, hidden, vague, distant, and interminable. It is a little difficult for a post-Imagist age to appreciate the fact that such words once held powerful associations of mystery or even terror to a century hot for certainties and more than a little impressed by the unknown.

But ideas change and with them words. It was the language itself, with its constant shift in word meanings and associations, that betrayed the emotionalist poets quite as much as their neglect of technique. No matter how sympathetic or learned, readers in an age where the breast is a (single) mammary gland, the heart an organ susceptible to fibrosis, and an alien a subject of the McCarran Act, cannot respond to Arnold's poem—or any like it—in the way his contemporaries did. The emotionalist poets built too many of their masterpieces on shifting sands. The problem of unstable connotation is, of course, one common to language and hence to imaginative writing at all times. Here I wish to stress a difference in degree: the emotionalist mode made connotative values the chief ingredient of its poems. Hence connotative shifts have done more damage to this kind of poetry than to a more precise, or more denotative, mode.

A final objection may be made to the language of this poem: its lack of concretion. This lack is to be attributed in part to Arnold's abstract latinisms, the
weakness of many a bookish poet. Here they abound: **anodyne**, reproved, distractions, unregarded, indiscernible, uncertainty, subterranean, infinitely, interminable, unwonted, elusive. But there are deeper reasons for this absence of the concrete. One, certainly, is that Arnold's argument has dominated the poem: he has not clothed his ideas in images. And in a sense the tradition is as much to blame as Arnold. When the Romantics rebelled against Augustan rationality, they tried to cast off the abstract language of that rational discourse. What Coleridge and Wordsworth could not foresee was that the revolution against a rational poetry would, like most revolutions, react so violently as to commit an opposite but parallel sin. In short, the abstract language of rational discourse came to be replaced in many cases by the abstract language of emotional discourse. This passage will illustrate:

But hardly have we, for one little hour,  
Been on our own line, have we been ourselves—  
Hardly had skill to utter one of all  
The nameless feelings that course through our breast,  
But they course on for ever unexpressed.  
And long we try in vain to speak and act  
Our hidden self, and what we say and do  
Is eloquent, is well—but 'tis not true!  
And then we will no more be racked  
With inward striving, and demand  
Of all the thousand nothing's of the hour  
Their stupefying power;

(59-70)

There is not a single image here, unless one counts the rather feeble river metaphor implied in the verb *course*. 

None of the key nouns (hour, line, skill, feelings, self, striving, nothings, power) nor the adjectives (nameless, unexpressed, hidden, eloquent, true, inward, thousand, stupefying) make appeal to the senses. The poem's basic image is an underground river, but not until the end of the poem is this image sustained enough to become more than an allegorical shadow. "Dover Beach" makes an interesting contrast with this poem, though there is not space enough to demonstrate it here. The two have a prosody, an emotional tone, and subjects quite similar. But "Dover Beach" is superior to "The Buried Life" exactly to the degree that Arnold's emotions are made concrete through images. The "Sea of Faith" is a real ocean, with waves and surf; the "ignorant armies" stumble and kill noisily in a real darkness.

A poem treated with some reverence even today is the ode Lowell wrote in 1865 to memorialize Harvard's war dead. It is to this "Commemoration Ode" that I should now like to turn for some evidence of American practice in the emotional mode. Except that the "Ode" is over four times as long as "The Buried Life," what has been said about the metric of the latter will apply here in almost every respect. There are the same irregular strophes, haphazard rhymes (again, mostly couplets), and unequal iambic lines. In subject and tone, however, the two are much different.
The "Ode" is an occasional poem—a patriotic eulogy—highly impersonal, and solemn (rather than melancholy) in tone. It is also a very derivative poem. This presents a special problem to our analysis, since the language used often is that of Shakespeare, Milton, Tennyson, or Emerson—to name those recognized easily.  

An examination of vocabulary reveals again the presence of favorite words—words appropriate to the public subject as Arnold's were to the private subject. Brave in various forms (bravely, braver, bravest) appears a total of twelve times; noble and its variants also occur twelve times. A cluster of "holy" words (divine, -er, -ly, immortal, sublime, sacred, saintlier, transfigured, angelic, radiant, ethereal) total sixteen appearances; trumpet-call and trump five times; soul six times. Of course, the poem's length has something to do with such high frequency. In addition to these emotional words, there are such others as tears, passion, raptured, fiery, cower, skulking, ignoble, craven, meek, base, rude, fiery. Also ample is the language of indefiniteness: dim, dumb, dis-voiced, mystic, nothings, dullness, vexing, nameless, unseen, feeble. 

Another significant trait of vocabulary here is the high frequency of polysyllables. Most of these words are of Latin or Greek origin, a large number are learned words, and, however skillfully or ineptly used in any poem, they
reveal the author's bookishness. Many of them are abstractions, often personified; most of the others (at least to the modern, non-classically-educated reader) have a low degree of concretion. As a major lexical element their appearance in poetry dates at least from Chaucer, and through Milton's example they gained very great sanction in English verse. These polysyllables have been put to many uses. Apart from giving an erudite, classical flavor to poetry, they also (as with Milton) enhance its rhetorical effects. In the euphonist mode, as we shall see later, they lend a distinctive rhythm. During the Restoration and the eighteenth century such words were used as instruments of precise intellectual discourse, but this use is less common in Romantic poetry.

Earlier I have mentioned Wordsworth's theoretical dislike of abstractions. He and his Romantic successors, however, frequently employed them. As the prime force of Romanticism waned these abstractions, along with other learned polysyllables, commonly became a source of weakness in poetry. When not used precisely and within a logical structure, their lack of concretion drew attention to itself; and they often grew to be mere tools of rhetoric, occurring in clusters and producing an effect of nebulous orotundity. Their optimum value in any poetry, but especially in a poetry of emotion like the Romantic, is attained when they appear in a contrasting context of plain,
concrete words.\textsuperscript{10}

Lowell has used polysyllables so copiously in this poem that I can do no more than select a representative sample. Here are a few: unventured, dilates, emprise, distempered, degenerate, deride, unexhausted, innate, saucious, deciduous, plebeian, imperishable, investiture, tenure. Also into this category go abstract or generic nouns which Lowell capitalizes either to personify or to dignify. His habit was characteristic of the emotional mode, especially in public poems. A rapid count in the "Ode" reveals twenty-five such nouns, some of which appear two, three, and four times: some are Reverend Mother (Harvard), Scholara, Death, War, Truth, Freedom, Fortune, Night, Day, Fate, Nation, Oblivion, Danger, Manhood, Soul, Old-World, Renown, and Time. Clearly a poem of such elevated thoughts would call for one's best Miltonic efforts in vocabulary.

A large class of words seldom found in the Arnold poem but frequent here are what may be called "poeticisms." Some were archaic expressions, possibly induced by the revived interest in medieval and Renaissance literature: meads, meed, erelong, erewhile, rock, methinks, naught, trump (for trumpet), churls. In any event, they were the stock in trade of much Romantic poetry. Others in this class are such stage-props of emotionalism as guerdon, boon, dross, paeon, aureoled, pansies, stint, wreath,
blazon, martyr, handmaid; and contracted forms like bide and scape. Words like these in Romantic poetry were the more obvious element of poetic diction; often they came to be used automatically, since they were felt to be inherently "poetic." Some of this last group are also archaisms, but distinct from the earlier group by reason of a very high frequency in nineteenth-century poetry. "Guerdon" and "boon", for example, were archaic in the colloquial and prose vocabularies, but very much alive in the language of poetry. What happened when the poet lost all control of such language is instanced by a fearsome and thrice-mixed figure like "happy homes and toils, the fruitful nest." Difficult as it may be to summon much sympathy for this kind of writing, one must nevertheless remember that the effort was toward a poetry of high seriousness, a poetry which would be, as the Romantics understood it, "sublime."

Syntax brings up fewer difficulties, but it fails to redeem the poem. Sentences average only six lines long, but that figure is deceptive. Most of the sentences are oratorically lengthy and complex; it is the frequent short exclamations and rhetorical questions that bring the average down. Inspirational composition habits coupled beautiful thoughts with loose grammar, as the following examples show: "Whither leads the path/To ampler fates that leads" (redundancy); "Such was he, our Martyr-Chief,/Whom late the nation he had led" (tautology and agreement); "standing
like a tower,/Our children shall behold his fame" (dangling modifier); "Let beacon-fire to answering beacon speak,/Kathadin tell Monadnock, Whiteface he" (confusing ellipsis).

The most serious consequence of linguistic maltreatment, however, occurs in the poem's imagery. We have seen in Arnold that over-attention to ideas may result in a dearth of imagery. What happens when neither emotion nor intellect are operating at a very high level—when, as Leavis says, the writer is "switching poetry on"—is that imagery becomes almost hopelessly garbled:

Ah, there is something here
Unfathomed by the cynic's sneer,
Something that gives our feeble light
A high immunity from Night,
Something that leaps life's narrow bars
To claim its birthright with the hosts of heaven;
A seed of sunshine that can leaven
Our earthly dullness with the beams of stars,
And glorify our clay
With light from fountains elder than the Day;
A conscience more divine than we,
A gladness fed with secret tears,
A vexing, forward-reaching sense
Of some more noble permanence;
A light across the sea,
Which haunts the soul and will not let it be,
Still beaconing from the heights of degenerate years.

(91-107)

Our first noun is the totally ambiguous something. Observe its progress as it metamorphoses into the most amazing image of American poetry. First it is "unfathomed" by a "sneeer"; next it gives "light...high immunity from Night"; then it "leaps life's...bar" and claims its birthright with the hosts of heaven" (the angels?). One may
then be somewhat startled to learn that the something is a "seed of sunshine." But the metamorphosis is not complete: the seed of sunshine "leavens...dullness," glorifies "our clay" with "light from fountains"; it is a "conscience," a "gladness," a "vexing, forward-reaching sense...of permanence," a "light across the sea" that "haunts the soul." And as we leave the seed of sunshine it is, like a movie travelogue sunset, "beaconing from...undegenerate years."

The trick is to read the poem rapidly, letting the words ricochet into the consciousness and then out again, being careful not to attempt any visualization; one can then say that he has a "feeling" about it. But we who insist on reading our poetry carefully and who demand at least a common-sense consistency of images can understand what fired the rage of Ezra Pound and his contemporaries in the early part of our century.

One conclusion which arrived inevitably from a study of language in this mode is that, at its extreme limit, emotionalism did not want its words to denote at all. Rather it attempted to use language harmonically—to employ words of affective value in patterns like musical chords, producing a predictable but vague emotional effect on the reader. Sometimes the poets were successful, but their inattention to linguistic technique (chiefly lack of respect for the meanings of words and lack of originality in vocabulary) caused a fuzziness that has increased as
the connotations of their emotional words have shifted. Even in the meditative poem of Arnold we have observed the blurred thought that resulted from imprecise language. It is like a man playing the guitar in mittens: harmonies emerge, but little melody.

3.

The euphonic mode needs less explanatory preface than the emotional mode, since the techniques of this style are about the same for poetry at any time. The basic assumptions of the following section are that (1) during the nineteenth century there was, among other things, a revived interest in creating verbally melodious poems, and (2) for the sake of this euphony writers were often willing to forego other qualities essential to the best poetry. Poe, Tennyson, and Hopkins were probably the masters of euphony during the period; but Poe was not a part of the immediate past, Hopkins was literally unavailable until 1918, and Tennyson's achievements in the mode can be demonstrated as well from any of the poets whom he influenced—and doubtless every poet for the rest of the century was, Swinburne most of all. Let us look at Swinburne's "Itylus," from the 1866 Poems and Ballads.12

We shall encounter in this mode a metric much different from that of the emotional. Here metric is ordinarily made conspicuous, since it contributes so much to sound.
"Itylus" is a poem of ten sixains rhyming a-b-c-a-b-c. Its unorthodox meter may be described as a basic ten-syllable line which has the dactyl as its normal foot but allows numerous iambic and trochaic variations. It contains four stresses per line. The poem uses a refrain which plays on the words sister and swallow; in all but one stanza this refrain is part of the first line.

The poem is a treasure-trove of recurring words. Swallow and O appear sixteen times, sister fourteen, heart eleven, forget and forgotten ten, follow, spring, and hast/hath nine each, variants of sing seven. Numerous words appear four and three times. But these cannot in the ordinary sense be called favorite words: the repetition is deliberate and technical. Swallow, O, and sister are, of course, explained by their presence in the refrain, a device of mass repetition. Several of the others are common rhyme words, hence are repeated. Nearly all the devices of euphony, here and elsewhere, depend on repetition. Meter is repetition of rhythm; rhyme and consonance are repetitions of end sound; alliteration and consonance, of initial sound; assonance and other vowel play, of medial sound.

To Swinburne, accustomed as he was to working with involved Continental forms like the villanelle and the rondeau, simple rhyme hardly scratched the surface of euphonic possibility. In this poem twenty-one of his
thirty rhymes are recurrent ones: swallow ten (eight times with follow), forget five, remember, south-mouth, and spring-sing two each. In fact he even toys with internal rhyme now and then, in "fleeh sweet swallow" and "light of the night." His trade-mark, so to speak was alliteration. In "Itylus" he operated at full speed on the sounds [s], [f], [h], and [θ], with minor variations on [w],[hw], and [l]. The sixth stanza will illustrate:

Swallow, my sister, O singing swallow,
I know not how thou hast heart to sing.
Hast thou the heart? is it all past over?
Thy lord the summer is good to follow,
And fair the feet of thy lover the spring:
But what wilt thou say to the spring thy lover?

(31-36)

The vocabulary of such a poem is dependent much less on idea or emotion than on technique. Even so, the choice of recurrent words is largely from the stock of emotionalist poetry: heart, forget/forgotten, sing, spring, the outcry O. The poem is, in fact, one sustained emotional outcry: it is the appeal Philomela makes to Procone to share their great sorrow, the death of Procone's son Itylus. The fact that emotion is fairly well under control may be credited to the disciplinary effects of technique.

But the music lulls us to sleep, and we must look closely to notice the poem's absence of movement, to detect the tautologies and ambiguities that concentration on mere sound has produced. "I.../Clothed with the light of
the night on the dew" strikes one as merely absurd; and
"is it all past over?" is either a howling redundancy, a
misspelling, or a bad pun; but lines like "My heart in me
is a molten ember,/And over my head the waves have met"
present real difficulties to comprehension. Presumably
the nightingale is alive and singing, since the poem is,
in fact, her song; but the line would indicate that she
has been drowned. Further, if her heart is a "molten
ember" what happens to it when the waves close over it?
Skilled as they undoubtedly are, all these euphonic tricks
are open to question. They satisfy musically, but do they
really contribute enough to justify them? The refrain
itself impedes movement; while such constructions as "Could
I forget or thou remember,/Couldst thou remember and I
forget" and lines five and six in the passage above strike
one as mere self-indulgence.

A leading American euphonist was Sidney Lanier, and
"The Marshes of Glynn" (1878) is probably his most suc-
cessful effort in that mode. In form this poem suggests
a fusion of the rambling emotionalist ode with the feverish
rhythms of the euphonic manner. It has eight strophes of
unequal length, in a basic meter of trisyllabic feet—dactyls and anapests—with a normal line of fourteen or fif-
teen syllables. (Actually some lines are as short as one
syllable.) The rhyme is nearly all in couplets, and there
are a few internal rhymes. Alliteration, though neither as well-planned nor as effective as in Swinburne, is quite as strong. Especially do efforts like "passionate pleasure of prayer," "trowel of trade" and "westward the wall of the woods" seem a little overdone.

Several features of vocabulary are striking. First, there is the full panoply of emotionalism: the nouns soul (five times), whisper, lovers, vows, desire, pleasure, good, fear, bitterness, doubt, dream, beauty, sin, pain, ecstasy; the adjectives beautiful, sweet, dear, heavenly, radiant, soft, passionate, wearisome, dreary, merciless, sad, still, glimmering, shimmering; the verbs allure, grievous, linger, clings, wavers; the indefinite terms dim (twice), unnameable, vast, and infinite; the archaisms of yore, fain, mete, ken, full soon and lo. There is rather less tendency to linger over favorite words—apart from soul and greatness (five times each) only the basic image words (marsh, sea, and woods) are repeated often. The vocabulary contains many abstract and learned polysyllables, which may seem strange in a descriptive poem: intricate, sinuous, and terminal occur twice each, while multiform, ponderous, affable, reverent, uttermost, infinite, and essences are typical others. But notice that nearly all these are trisyllables, which lend themselves readily to the dactyl. Again sound triumphs over sense.

The vocabulary is also heavily adjectival. There are
about two adjectives for every three nouns, an extremely high ratio in this period, according to the studies of Josephine Miles. These too are often trisyllables used for the meter's sake: beautiful, myriad, virginal, heavenly, radiant, wavering, riotous, wearisome. The frequency of compound words is another interesting feature. Of hyphenates alone there are twenty: some of these are sand-beach and marsh-grass (three times), live-oak and marsh-hen (twice), beautiful-braided, myriad-cloven, beach-lines, silver-wrought, nothing-withholding, rose-and-silver, wood-aisle. This practice, fairly common in the euphonic mode, seems to be a device to produce more polysyllables.

The syntax of the poem depends strongly upon the repetitive effect of coordinate and parallel structures:

Of the dim sweet woods, of the dear dark woods,
Of the heavenly woods and glades. (8-9)

To give the effects of rapid motion and smooth continuity, many of the sentences are long: the first one extends for thirty-six lines. But, as one might expect, such long sentences are frequently quite rambling and redundant. Here is a good example:

Sinuous southward and sinuous northward the shimmering band
Of the sea-beach fastens the fringe of the marsh to the folds of the land.
Inward and outward to northward and southward the beach-lines linger and curl
As a silver-wrought garment that clings to and follows the firm sweet limbs of a girl,
Vanishing, swerving, evermore curving again into sight,
Softly the sand-beach wavers away to a dim gray looping of light.

(49-54)

In the poem's obscurities one observes again the tendency for sound to outweigh sense. The sun shining through the forest's tangled foliage creates "virginal shy lights," a description that can only be accounted for (not explained) by looking at its rhyme line, "emerald twilights." Another melodic bit of nonsense is "the radiant marginal sand-beach within/The wide sea-marshes of Glynn." If "within," how then "marginal"? And why, in any sense "radiant"? In one place the marshes "spread and span like the catholic man who hath mightily won/God out of knowledge." Here we wonder whether the defect is not one of sensibility. "Spread and span" is something very like a tautology. The word "catholic," not capitalized, would seem to mean only "universal" or something similar. Why, finally, is it needed at all? At the risk of being tiresome, I must point out again that the typical euphonist poem needs to be read rapidly, with only the barest attention to word meanings. What rescues this poem from emotional and euphonic excess is its lavish but impressive imagery--the scene is occasionally felt, if the emotions are not.
4.

When Emerson spoke of a poetry in which "discourse... clothes itself in images"\textsuperscript{15} he described the highest activity of concretion—a perfect blend of image and idea. In actual practice, there were several lesser stages of the concretive mode. This section will examine the more notable ones. But first to clarify our terms. In this study concrete will be used as an antonym of abstract; it will mean anything which is perceived by the bodily senses, not merely the tangible or the visible. Allowance will be made wherever possible for two limitations of the concrete. One is that concretion in any given case depends upon context: the word land in "this glorious land of freedom" is an abstraction, but in "the pasture land behind the barn" it is concrete. The other is that words originally concrete can through overuse become abstract: clichés like "the arms of Morpheus," "hot as hell," and "watery grave" are cases in point.

One common form of concretion is the picture-poem, wherein the poet's main objective is to please the eye. Such a poem is "The Half of Life Gone"\textsuperscript{16} by the Pre-Raphaelite, William Morris. There are ideas and emotions in the poem, but the first are not complex and the second are not strong. The visual effect, creation of a picture, is all-important.
The poem's 112 lines are cast in a rather casual measure, mixed iambics and anapests, usually three feet (seven to nine syllables) per line. Stanzas form is unseparated quatrains with ballad rhyme: abcb. Though metric in the concrete mode could sometimes be quite rigid (Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott," for instance), concretion generally proceeded best where form did not impose many limitations. Poetry could be both concrete and euphonic, but it usually took a poet of great virtuosity, like Coleridge or Tennyson, to achieve both melody and exactness of description.

Still amply present in this poem is the Romantic vocabulary of emotion: bright, fairer, quivering, dear, happy, pleasure, pain, lovely, joy, sweet, mirth, weary, longing. So are the "poeticisms": wend, eve, begets, 'mid, nought, twain, yea, io, erst, agone. However many of the latter (especially archaisms like yea, erst, and agone) may be attributed as much to Morris' medievalism as to conventional Romantic practice. The vocabulary of indefiniteness, logically enough, is small: only strange (three times), thing, and measureless. Almost totally lacking are bookish polysyllables.

The central picture in the poem is a hay-making scene recalled from the poet's youth. The imagery, then, is of nature: hay appears four times; mead, sun, and fields three; grass, earth, rake, and wain twice. Swallows, herne, cloud, sky, wind, flowers, hedgerow, rushes, bank, and stream are
other nouns describing natural objects. Surprisingly few color words appear: only gray (twice), yellow, white, and red. More frequent is human imagery: lad (twice), boy, woman, men, maids, gaffers, wives, child, son, bailiff, farmer; also face, hands, feet. Few of these human images are developed, however, since the pictorial effect is panoramic rather than detailed. Some other concretized particulars deserve mention: ox-team, weir, bridge, village; and the auditory details talk, laughter, music, and voice.

Although concrete nouns outnumber abstractions by more than two to one, certain of the key nouns are abstract: right, wrong, life, thought, world, meaning, pleasure, joy, love, change. Adjectives are more equally distributed. To balance concretes like elm-clad, gleaming, narrow, high, sunlit, summer, and weedy are such abstractions as glad, best, happy, strange, sweet, lovely, and dear. Verbs occur about half as frequently as nouns, and over a third of them are forms of be, in accordance with the fairly static imagery. Verbs like creep, gleam, thump, flit, quiver, burn, flood, fall, drift, and hasten keep the poem from becoming a still-life. Also the fact that most verbs here are in present tense adds to Morris’s scene the realism of immediacy.

Few problems are presented by syntax. The sentences are regular in structure and length—they are, in all but two cases, an even number of lines long. There is not,
however, any consistent effort toward natural, idiomatic word order. Such inversions as these are common: "Yea I to myself am strange," "but little changed are they," "My hands will she hasten to take," "Then awhile shall we stand." Whenever the poet turns from concretion, the structure becomes rambling and redundant:

For here if one need not work
Is a place of happy rest,
While one's thoughts wend over the world
north, south, and east and west. (41-44)

Her laughter is gone and her life;
there is no such thing on earth. (85-86)

The most obscure passage in the poem is also the most emotional: an ambiguous use of "my love" causes one to overlook for some time the fact that the poet is referring to his dead mother.

The most sharply realized picture occurs early in the poem, before nostalgia and sentiment have clouded the images:

The forks shine white in the sun
round the yellow red-wheeled wain,
Where the mountain of hay grows fast;
and now from out the lane
Comes the ox-team drawing another,
comes the bailiff and the beer,
And thump, thump, goes the farmer's nag
o'er the narrow bridge of the weir.

(17-24)
As a second instance of the concretive mode, I should like to examine an early poem of Thomas Hardy. "Neutral Tones" (1867) may best be described as an example of an idea made concrete.

We stood by a pond that winter day,  
And the sun was white as though chidden of God,  
And a few leaves lay on the starving sod,  
-- They had fallen from an ash and were gray.

Your eyes on me were as eyes that rove  
Over tedious riddles solved years ago;  
And words played between us to and fro --  
On which lost the more by our love.

The smile on your mouth was the deadest thing  
Alive enough to have strength to die;  
And a grin of bitterness swept thereby  
Like an ominous bird awing......

Since then, keen lessons that love deceives,  
And wrings with wrong, have shaped to me  
Your face, and the God-ourst sun, and a tree,  
And a pond edged with grayish leaves.1

Except for rhyme pattern, the poem's metric is much like that of the Morris poem: mixed iambic and anapests in a line varying from eight to eleven syllables—again, a very flexible measure. Vocabulary indicates that while Hardy was attempting to be concrete, he did not try merely to create a pretty picture. Nor is the poem unpleasant in the terrifying Gothic manner of Poe. It is a poetry of harsh realism. The colors are white, gray, and grayish; the objects are dead leaves, starving sod, a bare wintery ash tree, a cold winter sun. Love is present, but only dead love: the woman's eyes are bored as with "tedious
riddles solved years ago"; her smile is feeble--"the dead-
est thing/Alive," and it distends finally to a "grin of
bitterness," the very caricature of joy. By skillful se-
lection the scene has been made concrete. A mere handful
of details carefully chosen, then in the closing lines
repeated, completes the picture as fully as it needs to be.

Emotion is, if anything, underplayed. Love (twice),
smile, bitterness, and wrong are the only terms directly
related to emotion. God and God-curt, strong connotative
terms, are emotional only through concretion: they describe
the deadness of the sun. In this regard, one should also
take notice of how "chidden of God" in the first stanza is
subtly intensified to "God-curt" in the fourth. Starving,
ordinarily a word with emotional connotations, here de-
scribes the soil; ominous describes (in simile) a bird.
Only two terms of indefiniteness appear: riddles and thing.
The first is appropriate in context, since one does not
need to know what the riddles are; and the second is used
precisely: "the deadest thing" (i.e., object of any kind).
Abstractions are fairly few: love, strength, wrong, bitter-
ness, tedious and ominous. The last three, none of them
bookish words, are the only polysyllables in the poem.

One finds in this poem a syntax much like that which
the poems of the next section will have. Its order and
its rhythms approach those of the spoken language--plain
and apparently unemphatic. There are no inversions and
only one obscurity, the puzzling eighth line. The passage "love deceives,/And wrings with wrong" is an ellipsis that might be better if "wrings" had an object, but no loss of communication is involved. So far as I can see, the poem is entirely free of redundancy.

The remark that "love deceives,/And wrings with wrong" expresses the central idea of the poem. But so well has this idea been dramatized (through the figures of the lovers) and concretized (through the scene) that the statement of it might have been omitted without loss of clarity. The objects in the poem do not merely represent the idea: in their totality, they are the idea.

The two poems above reveal some general methods of concretion, but they do not show the important historical changes of this mode during the nineteenth century. Coleridge and Keats began the tradition in Romanticism of a strongly concretive poetry. Both of these poets combined a gift for sensuous expression with a profound belief in the liberating power of the imagination. By Tennyson's time concretion in poetry had become less the expression of high individual imagination than the exploitation of tested techniques. As a result imagery grew more ornate and incidental, less integral to idea and structure. After Tennyson the Pre-Raphaelites Rossetti, Morris, and Swinburne developed a vivid, opulent imagery, the natural extension of Tennyson's but even more purely decorative.
than his, and further from the imagery of nature that gave so much freshness to early Romantic poetry. By the end of the century English poetry (and to a somewhat lesser extent, American poetry) was richly concrete but frequently ornamental and artificial. As B. Ifor Evans has observed:

Art abhors the lithograph, and the verse in the manner of the Pre-Raphaelites has been mechanically reproduced. Even without the imitators it had within it the source of its own weakness, the reliance on a beauty overgarnished, show-pieces fashioned out in rich colours that contrasted with the ugly [industrial] world about them.

I have given here the mainstream of the concretive mode. Such an account does not take into consideration other less influential developments like Browning's exploration of the grotesque, Whitman's catalogues of realistic imagery, or Emily Dickinson's hyperboles of the commonplace. Important as these were in their own right as artistic achievement of sometimes very high order, they made their mark on a later age than the decade we are about to examine.

5.

Of various attempts at escaping the tyranny of Romantic poetic diction, none was more successful than the recourse to idiomatic language. This mode had various manifestations, and it did not achieve anything like a final
success until the present century. But in the last half of the nineteenth it moved, if at times slowly and unsteadily, in the direction of a language more salutary to poetry than the Romantic dispensation had provided. Three examples will show clearly enough for my purposes the main directions of this mode. The first two are passages from long poems: the idiomatic mode, like the spoken language from which it arose, must be studied as a continuum, but it need not be considered in terms of larger form. It is a mode capable of almost endless extension (The Ring and the Book, for instance), and it often tends—especially in the nineteenth century—to have no really poetic form at all. Generally it will follow only the large, amorphous outlines of whatever conversation, anecdote, or reminiscence it has for subject matter.

The first example is of dialect verse, probably the earliest and crudest attempt to escape high-flown literary diction. I have chosen the first sixty lines of Lowell's "Sunthin' in the Pastoral Line" because it contains more elements of serious poetry than most dialect verse, which as a rule found humor, sentiment, or mild satire its best material. And from Lowell's erudite introduction to the book in which this poem appears (Biglow Papers, Second Series) there is convincing evidence that he used dialect speech with real knowledge of its sources and to definite literary ends other than humorous.
This is a poem with a high degree of concretion. The passage contains over a hundred nouns, about eighty of which are concrete. Approximately the same ration exists in the forty-five adjectives between descriptive and limiting forms. The vocabulary of emotion has been severely repressed: heart appears twice, good, feelin', sin, pleasure, dread, and holy once each. Also rare is the language of indefiniteness: only the four-times-repeated things (appropriate here because of its commonness in idiomatic speech), sun-thin' (twice) and dim are very vague. Dooty (Duty) is the only personification.

Most noticeable of idiomatic devices are contraction and cacography. Contractions occur about forty times in the passage, some being merely colloquial (we'd, I'd, don't, there's, I've), most being dialectal ('thout, natur', 'twuz, feelin', 'taint, back'ard). Cacography serves two purposes—humor and phonetic accuracy—and it is difficult to say of any given spelling which has been intended. Words like funitooor (furniture), sheers (shares), trousers (trousers), and almanickes (almanacs) appear to be faithful dialect renderings, but precinke, noospaper, ole,rebble (rebel), wuz, git, and kerry seem merely to have played on the Victorian funny-bone, which was always tickled by misspellings.

A sizeable number of colloquial expressions give the real flavor of human speech better than cacography. Some are as follows: "goodness knows," "fust or last," "kind o'
worked into," "so's 't they can't...write," "which 'tain't," "go it," "they're apt to," "kind o' winch" (wince), "to worry thru," "sure ez sin," "I own up," "apt to doubt."

But side by side with such fresh native expression one finds a number of poetisms only thinly disguised by caco-ography: "the precinks dread" (a Miltonic echo); "dim with dust," "fling on April's hearse/Your...nosegays," "springs that...toss the fields full o' blossoms"; and the pedantic pun, "Half our May's so awfully like Mayn't."

The poem's syntax is not as idiomatic as it might be. It follows more closely the regular rhythms of iambic pentameter couplets than the broken ebb-and-flow of conversation. Sentences are involved and long (they average nearly nine lines each), with frequent use of colons and semicolons. Of the devices commonly used to give colloquial irregularity to verse, only five dashes and one set of parentheses appear, and the rather crude expedient (in poetry) of italics for stress is also used once. Some poetic inversions worthy of note are "the precinks dread," "your queen to choose," "wut they've airly read," and "whose rolled-up leaves ef you oncurl."

Ultimately dialect refused to adapt itself to serious poetry in America. The strict technical demands of poetry conflicted with the free-and-easy ways of dialect speech; and since dialect had for so long been associated with humor, this traditional association was another bar to its
success in serious writing. Even though Riley, Lunbar, and Daly carried the practice into the next century, it eventually died out, even for light verse. But, if for no other reason than its excesses, dialect poetry had an important influence on contemporary poetry. One can hardly conceive the poems of Frost existing, for instance, except against the wide, garish backdrop of dialect verse.

An idiomatic English better adapted to serious poetry was that used in Robert Browning's dramatic monologues. The speech was free of dialectal spelling and (at its best) of regional peculiarities. The fact that the voice was more often Browning's than his characters' need not concern us here. My text is the first forty-eight lines of "Bishop Blougram's Apology," which first appeared in "Men and Women" (1855). Of the metrical form, blank verse, little need be said except that it has always served as a flexible medium for the spoken voice.

The passage is more active than concrete: it has seventy verbs to sixty-one nouns and a mere twenty-four adjectives, as compared to Lowell's seventy, one hundred four, and forty-five in a longer passage. While there are many concrete nouns (wine [four times], dinner [three], chairs, glass, Abbey, basilicas, lime-kiln, church, armchair, bishop, etc.), there is an equally large number of abstract nouns (truth [twice], price, duty, depreciation,
soul, sense, circumstance, value, pride, account, trade, give and take). Essentially the same is true of the adjectives; the descriptives half-baked, cool, hot, long, classes! are balanced by the abstract or limiting more, final, different, free, certain, worldly, good, bad, and clever. An aid to concretion are the proper nouns Blougam (three times), Pugin's, Mr. Gigadiba, Corpus Christi Day, and Rome. From the lexicon of emotionalism truth (twice), soul, good, bad, dear, fair, fear, and despise are present to remind us that we are still sailing under the Romantic flag. The only indefinite is the colloquial thing which appears but once.

One novel feature of this mode is the high frequency of personal (including possessive) pronouns. A rapid count has produced fifty-five, thirty of which are first person and fifteen second person. The effect in this poem is to give the natural ring of the spoken voice. One ordinarily talks more of himself than anyone else, and (in the dramatic monologue at least) there is usually an unknown auditor, a "you" to be addressed. Personal pronouns are much rarer in the Lowell passage, incidentally: nine first person and eight second person.

Contractions are less common here than in the Lowell, befitting the more educated speaker (no dropping of final g's, for instance), but they still remain fairly numerous: we'll, it's, they're, don't, you'd, we'd, that's, thing's,
now's, and you'll. The contraction I' faith seems more Shakespearean than Victorian. Of idiomatic and colloquial constructions one finds such phrases as "bless his heart," "you take me," "never fear!", "Faith!", "all sorts of," "I warrant," "my dear sir," "it's fair give and take" and the colloquial metaphor, "The hand's mine now and...you follow suit."

Browning's syntax is considerably more like that of the spoken language than Lowell's, which is to say that Browning better understood the fact that speech is free in rhythm, disjointed, clipped, and at times slightly redundant. But here he does not, like his masters, the Elizabethans, sacrifice the regularity of his blank verse to achieve naturalness of speech rhythm. Even so, his technique is admirable. Sentences tend to be short, in some cases merely elliptical fragments. The general pattern is to dam up three or four very short sentences and overflow them with a longer one, producing an effect of nervous, vital rhythm. Counting independent fragments, there are twenty-one sentences in the passage, an average of one for every two and a third lines. Dashes (fourteen), dots of transition (once), and parentheses (twice) appear to break up the metrical flow. In such a passage as the one below, Browning catches the accents of speech quite well:
"Blougram? I knew him"—(into it you slide)  
"Lined with him once, a Corpus Christi day,  
All alone, we two; he's a clever man:  
And after dinner,—why, the wine you know,—  
Oh, there was wine, and good!—what with  
the wine...  
I with, we began upon all sorts of talk!  
He's no bad fellow, Blougram;  
(35-38)

This elliptical, abrupt syntax sometimes led Browning into difficulties. The lines below, for example, give  
only an illusion of the idiomatic; actually they are quite  
bookish:

...don't you know,  
I promised if you'd watch a dinner out,  
We'd see truth dawn together?—truth that peeps  
Over the glasses' edge when dinner's done,  
And body gets its sop and holds its noise  
And leaves soul free a little. Now's the time:  
Truth's break of day!  
(15-21)

For the Romantic writer of dramatic verse, there was simply  
no escape from the Elizabethans, it would seem.

In a recent essay, T. S. Eliot spoke of "the three  
voices of poetry."²⁴ One, he said, is the poet talking  
to an audience, as in verse drama. Another is the poet  
talking through a persona or mask, as in the Lowell and  
browning poems above. A third is the poet talking to him-  
self, in lyric or meditative verse. I should like to con-  
clude this examination of the available past by studying
a poem where the poet is talking to himself (properly herself), since it is this kind of poem which has, for good or bad, dominated English-language verse for the past thirty years. The poem is Emily Dickinson's "Griefs." It consists of nine quatrains in ballad meter and rhyme. What one notices at once is that the idiom has been toned down: there is no mask here; there are no obvious concessions to the colloquial. The voice is not required to entertain or inform a listener. Ultimately it need satisfy only itself.

I measure every grief I meet
With analytic eyes;
I wonder if it weighs like mine,
Or has an easier size.

I wonder if they bore it long,
Or did it just begin?
I could not tell the date of mine,
It feels so old a pain.

I wonder if it hurts to live,
And if they have to try,
And whether, could they choose between,
They would not rather die.

I wonder if when years have piled--
Some thousands--on the cause
Of early hurt, if such a lapse
Could give them any pause;

Or would they go on aching still
Through centuries above,
Enlightened by a larger pain
By contrast with the love.

The grieved are many, I am told;
The reason deeper lies,—
Death is but one and comes but once,
And only nails the eyes.
There's grief of want, and grief of cold—
A sort they call 'despair';
There's banishment from native eyes,
In sight of native air.

And though I may not guess the kind
Correctly, yet to me
A piercing comfort if affords
In passing Calvary,

To note the fashions of the cross,
Of those that stand alone,
Still fascinated to presume
That some are like my own.

The vocabulary, in its move away from concretion, is conservative. There are thirty-seven nouns and sixteen adjectives, by no means a large number for a poem of this length. Moreover, many of these nouns are abstract: grief, (three times), pain (twice), years, cause, lapse, pause, contrast, reason, death, want, despair, kind, banishment, sight, comfort, passing, and centuries. Adjectives are mostly abstract or limiting: like (twice), every, analytic, easier, such, any, many, fascinated. In syntax one finds poetic ellipses like "It feels so old a pain" and "could they choose between," inversions like "The reason deeper lies" and "A piercing comfort it affords."

Despite this evidence to the contrary, the poem is idiomatic and represents, I believe, an advance in language technique. There is a high occurrence of personal pronouns: twenty-seven, thirteen of them in first person. Another mark of the idiomatic is the frequent use of they and it without an expressed referent. The contraction
there's appears twice, both times in an expletive construction (also idiomatic); and the informal "I wonder if" is used four times. Another instance of idiomatic usage is the redundancy of *if* in stanza four; and a final example is the mislocated modifier in "only nails the eyes," stanza six.

Notice how several of the abstract terms virtually achieve concretion by intimate treatment—their adoption into a context of familiar, concrete things. The poet's grief becomes intimate: it is "mine"; it is visible and measurable, has weight and size, even a "date" (a history); it is familiar, an "old...pain." Persons with griefs suffer physically: they "ache" for centuries. Death "nails the eyes." This world of griefs is "Calvary"; and "fashions of the cross" is an almost impudent concretion, implying as it does that sufferers wear, rather than bear, their crosses. Finally, observe how, by delicate quotation, the poet disclaims responsibility for the highly emotional despair: she deposits it in the poem with grammatical tweezers.

The obscurities, one will realize, are of a different order than those of the "Commemoration Ode." They come from over-condensation rather than over-inflation, from a finicking and not a careless use of words. In short, the obscurities are usually solvable through close and repeated reading. This last brings up a matter which is vital to
any discussion of contemporary poetry, but which can only be alluded to here: the shift of the poet-reader relationship. In terms of language (which is not, of course, the only consideration) this shift to a more difficult and demanding poetry resulted from the personal, necessarily obscure language that poets began to create for themselves in an effort to escape the banalities of a worn-out Romantic diction. The process is at work in this last poem: both syntax and vocabulary are beginning to grow private.

"Griefs," then, illustrates a skillful and highly personal modification of the idiomatic mode. It bears the same relation to this mode as Hardy's poem bears to the mode of concretion. In both cases we find a balance between extremes, a careful exploitation of the modal possibilities, rather than a total surrender to them. The concretive and idiomatic modes proved to be the most accessible to later poetry; but it must be stressed again that the period we are about to study was one of great change, hence great confusion; and all four modes existed for a while on apparently equal terms. In fact, one way of understanding what happened in that decade might be to consider the period as a siege where, after a bitter struggle, the old guard (emotionalism and euphony) surrendered to the insurgents (concretion and the idiomatic) and an uneasy peace followed.
Critics and historians are almost unanimous in their view that the two decades between Whitman's death in 1892 and the first appearance of *Poetry, A Magazine of Verse* in 1912 represent American poetry's lowest ebb in nearly a century. The most recent historian of American poetry has said:

"Formal poetry in America in the year 1900 seemed benighted in every sense; it was imitative, sentimental, and "genteel." Its relationship to the vigorous elements in the culture which surrounded it was superficial. Its relationship to the vigorous poetic talents which only recently had ceased functioning was weak.... The weight of British Victorian tradition lay heavily upon American poets in general; and the strong native moralizing bent of the poets of the school readers... still operated."

Gregory and Zaturenska's slightly earlier history found Stedman's term, "the twilight interval," appropriate to describe this era. That a decline was felt at the time can be attested by Stedman's observation:
I think that even the younger generation will agree with me that there are lacking qualities to give distinction to poetry as the most impressive literature of our time; qualities for want of which it is...compelled to yield its eminence to other forms of composition, especially to prose fiction.

Earlier in the same work he had said more explicitly: "Our taste, in spite of the diverse and soulless yet attractive productions of the studio and the closet, is that of an interregnum." The periodicals of the day were full of the question, Is poetry in a decline?

But in literature unanimity of opinion is always a little suspect. Indeed it is the destruction of such unanimity, by one doubter or another, that brings about those cyclic shifts in critical opinion upon which the vitality of literature so greatly depends. To be sure, some of these shifts are nothing more than the inconstant flurries of literary fashion. Yet a careful reading of the texts involved, together with a certain independence of mind, can always contribute positively to our understanding of the literary past. It is this kind of a study that I propose, not with the ambitious intention of reevaluating American poetry, but with the hope that such a work may cast useful light into a murky passage of our poetic history.

By examining the work of eight representative poets --Woodberry, Sterling, Santayana, Moody, Lodge, Stickney,
Hoblnson, and Pound—this chapter and the two following will attempt to show how various nineteenth-century language influences operated on poetry and which of them eventually survived: in other words, to show that the state of American poetry in the decade 1900-1910 cannot be adequately explained as simple decline or decadence, but must be interpreted as a struggle of transition.

The poetic diction which had arisen from emotionalism came to represent, in the minds of many twentieth-century poets, all that was stale and outmoded about Romanticism. Hence the most aggressively "new" poets employed various expedients in an attempt to be free of such language. Its effect, however, was pervasive. For some years it continued (often in the company of an orotund formal syntax) as a principal element in the work of certain poets with solid reputations. Its use, however, came increasingly to be a sign of conservatism.

One of the more eminent conservatives during this period was George Edward Woodberry. To a present-day reader his poetry seems so clearly of the nineteenth century and so patently derived from the major Romantic poets that it is hard to understand the causes for his reputation. Born in 1855, Woodberry was as nearly contemporary with Twain, Howells, James, Aldrich, and Gilder as he was with Stickney, Robinson, Moody, and Lodge; but his first book
of verse did not appear until 1890 and he continued to publish poetry until 1920. His reputation as a literary critic was considerable. He edited the works of Shelley, collaborated with Stedman in an edition of Poe, wrote critical biographies of Hawthorne, Poe, Swinburne, and Emerson, and published twelve other volumes of literary essays. As a teacher of comparative literature at Columbia University, Woodberry's influence was wide-spread and pervasive.

The point of view consistently upheld in his criticism is that of Romantic idealism, tempered with a native moral strain. As a critic he interested himself mainly in ideas. The ruling thesis of his criticism is the concept that

...mankind in the process of civilization stores up race-power, in one form or another, so that it is a continually growing fund, and ...literature, pre-eminently, is such a store of spiritual race-power, derived originally from the historical life or from the general experience of man, and transformed by imagination so that all which is not necessary falls away from it and what is left is truth in its simplest, most vivid and vital form. Thus I [have] instanced mythology, chivalry, and the Scriptures as three such sifted deposits of the past.

Today this belief would be called "a concern for Myth"; it is, in fact, the forerunner of a most significant area of modern critical study.

But when Woodberry considered the nature of poetry and its origin in the poet's mind—that is to say, the fundamentals of poetry—he aligned himself solidly with
the past, the forces of Anti-Craft:

The first radical trait of poetry throughout [its history] is the presence of emotion, and this to so marked a degree that it is characteristically described as madness.

The will is laid to sleep, and the mind works without conscious self-direction. The poet craves emotion, and feeds the fire that consumes him, and only under this condition is he baptized with creative power.

In the stroke of genius there is no calculation. The poet does not scan his verses, nor hunt his rhymes, any more than the musical composer seeks for concords; still less does he search for color and image and idea.

To a late Romantic, however, there would be qualifications and extensions. First, in the relation of emotion to poetry: Woodberry posited as poetry's second "radical trait" the control of emotion—"by rhythm," although he did not state specifically how this control would be accomplished.

And an extension of standard Romantic language theory occurs in this observation:

Emotion discharges itself through accustomed channels, through images and phrases and cadences that have become its known language....The expression of emotion is generally conventional.

The word language is ambiguous here, but certainly if it is taken in its literal sense, the passage codifies what had earlier been implicit about a poetic diction. The passage gives sanction to the use of a conventional vocabu-
ulary and imagery. We should not, then, be greatly surprised to find in Woodberry the vocabulary of Romantic emotionalism pushed to its extreme limit. We may, in addition, anticipate a conservative prosody, if "accustomed channels" has any reference to form.

The problem of precisely what poems to use for examination has been here, as elsewhere, a vexing one. Limiting oneself to books published during the decade leads to inaccuracy whenever any volume includes poems known to have been written earlier. On the other hand, a search for composition dates of each poem might, with eight poets, be endless. I have compromised by omitting from consideration any poems known to have been written much before 1900 and have added poems from later collections that are known to have existed in or before 1910. With Woodberry I have used Poems (1903) and some additional poems from The Flight (1914) which had been published in periodicals between 1903 and 1910.

By standards of late Romantic practice, Woodberry's metric is skilled and varied, though hardly original: Tennyson and Swinburne have left their mark. Generally Woodberry favored short metrical units—trimeter and tetrameter quatrains, the ballad stanza, and the tetrameter couplet. His purpose may possibly have been to offset by metrical concision some of the efflorescence of Romantic diction, though in his hands these forms were no great aid
to either clarity or compression. Here is a typical passage in Woodberry's short line:

Come, love; my heart is burning
To reach unto thy hand,
Come, love; my soul is yearning
For the mystical new land;
Now where thy eyes are bending
Mayst thou thy lover see
Midway the height ascending
That leadeth up to thee.

("The Lover," Poems, p. 86)

The casual metric of the ode occurs frequently enough, however, to link Woodberry even closer to the emotionalists. In one passage, from "Flower Before the Leaf," this free-wheeling meter very closely approaches vers libre:

Flower before the leaf!
Ah, once here in the sweet season--
Flash of blue wings, birds in chorus,
Ere the violet, ere the wild-rose,
While the linden lingered and the elm tree--
Years ago a boy's heart broke in blossom,
Flower before the leaf,
While he wandered down the valley, loving you.

(Poems, p. 68)

One also finds the galloping rhythms of the euphonists, as in "Comrades":

Where are the friends that I knew in my Maying,
In the days of my youth, in the first of my roaming?
We were dear; we were leal; ah, far we went straying;
Now never a heart to my heart comes homing!

(The Flight, p. 55)
Some of Woodberry's later work is more intricate in form. In general, however, his was a received tradition of metric: as a technician he had enough skill to be considered a careful writer, but one finds little in the way of real experiment. In matters other than stanza form and meter, the discoveries of the nineteenth-century euphonists also sufficed Woodberry: Swinburnian alliteration ("wandering woof of winds and waters wove") and Tennysonian incantation ("Faintly shall soft echoes call.../round fair--round fair--round fair"); "But more doth a man's heart mind it--/0 more, more, more!"). Perhaps the farthest limit to which this kind of repetition can be taken is the following, from an earlier poem:

false dawn, false dawn, false dawn--
Alas, when God shall wake!
False dawn, false dawn, false dawn--
Alas, our young mistake!
False dawn, false dawn, false dawn--
0 heart betrayed, break, break!

(Poema, p. 7)

The poem's title is, more or less inevitably, "False Dawn."

The vocabulary of Woodberry's poetry is predominantly emotional, containing the same limited group of words that by this time had become, in Thompson's phrase, "the Praetorian cohorts of poetry": nouns like bliss, pain, heart, soul, dread, love, smile, blush, sigh, bosom, joy, kiss, breast, fervor; adjectives like sweet, lovely, perilous,
tender, pure, throbbing, sad, gloomy, cold, lonely; verbs like love, smile, kiss, die, fear, moan. Many of these words, of course, are the stock in trade of all poetry; it is their frequency here that is significant.

By the time Woodberry started writing poetry, however, the language of emotionalism had commenced to lose its force, and poets who still employed the emotional mode were forced to a frequent use of words connoting powerful emotions—all too often emotions much stronger than the context of the poem required: mauness, rapture, passion, despair, moan, bliss, terror, tremble, wild, shuddering, throbbing. This exaggerated emotionalism was not new to Romantic poetry; as "the Romantic agony" its history has been carefully traced by Mario Praz; but by Woodberry's time it had become little more than a weak literary convention:

O, blithe beneath the brand of June
My heart danced with the stars in tune;
And, throb on throb, deep nature's flood
Grew warm and gladdened in my blood.

("The Blood-Red Blossom," Poems, p. 112)

And all this marvellous beauty is a madness in my brain;
Forever my joyful being is dying--dying in pain;
Of the flush of the bough, of the fragrance of woods, of the moan of the dove
Weary--and weary of passion--and thrice, thrice weary of love.

("Seaward," Poems, p. 139)
And my heart—all the night it is crying, crying
In the bosoms of dead lads carling—ear.

("Comrades," The Flight, p. 56)

Woodberry's favorite words show little individuality;
most of them are Romantic clichés: bower (perhaps because
it rhymes with flower and hour); flame, fire, and burning
(often metaphorically, to describe emotion); sweet, bliss,
glory, bosom, kiss, and garden. The poetic diction of
Romanticism played an important part in Woodberry's work;
some of these words are nouns like glory, laurel, Muse,
spirit, enchantment, paeans, being, orb, starry sphere,
billows, firstling; adjectives like angelic, fragrant,
blasted, divine, lonely, wilding, immortal, radiant, weird,
majestic; verbs like trill, rue, o'erflow, murmur, fling;
archaisms like mead, old, von, and brake (past tense of
break). Other poeticisms are contractions like 'twixt,
'tis, 'neath, o'er; archaic second person in pronouns
(thee, thou, thine, thy) and verbs (taughtest, gavest,
know'at); and the syllabic augmentation of participles
like blessed, veiled, sweet-toned, winged. So far as
its diction is concerned, a passage like this might have
been written any time after 1798:

In every youth once beats the poet's heart,
While in his bosom these bright ardors start;
And dearly then the affections, lorn and lone,
Cling round the breast where first a friend is
known;
Hark, 'tis the rushing cries of life and sound
of trumpets blown!

("Exeter Ode," Poems, p. 190)
Nor is it a surprise to find in abundance the vocabulary of the indefinite: infinite, dim, and mystic are particular favorites; but distant, remote, somewhere, blind, inexpressible, secret, love's mystery, vague, unspoken, strange, and wondrous are also among the more notable examples. As a rule abstract and learned language in Woodberry occurs in the more formal poems (the occasional ode and dedicatory verses), yet a nature poem like "The Rose Power" seems to betray its author's bookishness:

So perishable this incandescent frame,
Lone Nature's inextinguishable pyre
Of transitory loveliness and bliss,—
This undulating and eternal flame
Of beauty burning in its perfumed fire,
And passion dying in its tropic kiss.

(Poems, p. 81)

Woodberry's syntax fits his vocabulary; it is formal and "poetic," rarely employing the natural cadences of speech and in fact quite prone to awkward constructions that happen to be metrically smooth: "Vacant the rock, of every herb swept clean,/Juts naked in the blue sky" ("Demeter," The Flight, p. 86); "Me darkness compasses, and starless woe;/Me living doth night's sepulchre enclose" ("The Mighty Mother," Poems, p. 125). It is a little hard to generalize about the length of Woodberry's sentences. As a rule they are short when the lines are short, long when the lines are long or (as in the odes) irregular.
In the poems with a regular stanza pattern, sentences rarely spill over, but end with the stanza. An effect of continuity is gained at times by the common expedient of linking clauses with semicolons:

The star that most is mine once did I see;
No cloud there was; only the reddened air
Bloomed round where it smiled, all bright and fair;
Then most of all love seemed divine to me.

("Love Delayed," Poems, p. 97)

For the most part, Woodberry's syntax presents few problems; though it is formal, even stilted at times, it rarely causes obscurity. As we shall see, however, Woodberry's obscurities are rarely owing to any kind of complexity. They are almost inevitably the result of vague words or confused imagery.

A high degree of concretion is present in the poems of Woodberry. The imagery comes largely from nature, but it is a Romantic imagery which has passed through the Pre-Raphaelite hothouse and emerged lush, lavish, and stifling in its sensuality; it is an imagery of the studio and the rose garden. Consequently its beauties are conventional, its application is decorative and non-functional. Rarely is an image sustained long enough to be meaningful. Even less often does it acquire any symbolic power. The most frequently encountered imagery is of flowers; one
book (Wild Eden) is little more than a collection of them:

The arbutus unto the violet yields;
Soon the wild daisies flood the fluttering fields;
And last the cardinal and the golden-rod
Lift to the blue the soft fire of the sod;
So moves, from bloom to bloom, the flower of love.

("From the Young Orchards," Poems, p. 115)

Even in the later poems flower imagery is frequent. "Prosperine" contains morning glories, daisies, poppies, marigolds, hyacinths, narcissi, roses, and lilies, as well as reeds, grass, wheat, barley, and corn. The familiar metaphor of youth as the swelling bud or flowering blossom was one that had a special appeal to Woodberry. Feeling perhaps that this floral imagery was a little too static, he commonly livened it by allusions to fire, flame, and light: "the rose lights the alleys," "the burning shell," "this incandescent frame," and "this undulating and eternal flame" (all references to a rose garden); "the one deep rose-plume drifting fire," "the soft fire of the sod," "flame from the breast of the rose."

Another large source of imagery is the sea; and while feels now and then his New England sea-fondness, it is mostly a Pre-Raphaelite sea he sails:

Whether the purple furrow heaps the bows with dazzling spray,
Or buried in green-based masses they dip the storm-swept day,
Or the white fog ribbons o'er them, the strong ship holds her way;

("Homeward Bound," Poems, p. 102)

Sometimes it is a uniquely Victorian sea, the fantastic composite of Massfield and Swinburne:

I will go down in my youth to the hoar sea's infinite foam;
I will bathe in the winds of heaven; I will nest where the white birds home;
Where the sheeted emerald glitters and drifts with bursts of snow
In the spume of stormy mornings, I will make me ready and go;

("Seaward," Poems, p. 136)

Only occasionally do the waves cease being violet billows; then they can be recognized as part of a genuine North Atlantic sea:

The moon is up; put off from shore,
And lapt on tides of wakeful night,
And blowing with the canvas cloud,
Know me in my Atlantic home --
The wave-wet deck, the singing shroud,
The rail half-buried in the foam!

("To Professor A.V. Williams Jackson," Poems, p. 179)

Though often conventional or derivative, Woodberry's imagery is usually clear enough. Yet, like all emotion-alists, he was prone to sacrifice the visual to the auditory and affective. The imagery of his "Ode Read at the Emerson Centenary Services" affords a striking parallell
with Lowell's in the "Commemoration Ode" (supra, pp. 59-60):

O Mother-state, white with departing May,
A hundred Mays depart; this beauty aye
Streams from thy breasts, a thousand children
owning
Whose lines are made the scriptures of thy youth,
And him the first, whose early voice intoning
With pointing finger read God's primal truth.
From sire to son was stored the sacred seed;
Age piled on age to meet a nation's need;
Fill the high natal hour,
Rounding to perfect power,
Upon the verge of confluent ages borne,
Sound genius' height sublime,
And set a star upon the front of time,
That spreads, as far as sunset flame, thy spiritual morn.

(Poems, pp. 157-158)

The mixed figures, the rapid and disjointed shuffling of incongruous images, and the occasional ludicrous figure ("this beauty...streams from thy breasts") brought on by neglect of the visual for the sake of rhetoric—all are here. If it had done nothing else, the Imagist movement would deserve our everlasting gratitude for cauterizing this kind of thing from poetry.

What has already been said about Woodberry's vocabulary and syntax will indicate rather clearly that the idiomatic mode failed to touch his formalism. Certainly the grand manner of Romantic emotionalist poetry found little place for the idiomatic. It might also be mentioned that persons are seldom individualized in Woodberry's work, hence have no opportunity to speak in their own voices.
Nor does he ever, like Browning, speak in his own voice: his "mask" is always the formal one of the bard. His attempts at speech are invariably literary, as here:

"Whence comest thou, Child, when April wakes,  
So phantom-fair through these green brakes?  
Why wilt thou follow, fond and fain,  
My footsteps to the wood again?"

("The Blood-Red Blossom," Poems, p. 131)

Only during the decade after 1910, in imitating the Italian poets (and perhaps after re-reading his Browning) did he approach the cadences and idiom of speech in a few poems:

"Where to?"

--"Where to? I don't know. The road only  
So long is the guide of my feet.  
I go. I don't ask. My country?  
'Tis the world--'tis tranquil and sweet."

("The Poet in Italy," Flight, p. 62)

"Joking? oh, no signore,  
I was only thinking in fun,  
Modo Siciliano, --  
Always a little sun.  
E molto curioso  
How many thoughts there are,--"

("Calogero," Flight, p. 64)

But the discovery was not pursued; Woodberry's later poems are, with these few exceptions, as free of colloquial taint as his earliest.

Woodberry's language, like his metric and his subjects, drew from the received tradition of late Romantic poetry.
The vocabulary of emotionalism, mounted on the strenuous rhythms of the euphonic mode and exposed to the cloying floralism of the Pre-Raphaelites, is Woodberry's poetic idiom. The effect of the euphonists and the Pre-Raphaelites upon emotionalist poetry was enervating; language became gradually dissociated from ideas, through its drive toward beauty of sound and image. Hence in this belated Romantic one finds what can, accurately enough, be called "brainless poetry," a poetry written totally with (and for) the esthetic sensibility. Nor does its language, expressed in images, bear and consistent relation to reality. If the famous division of William James can apply here, this is "tender-minded" poetry, in the worst sense. It has no intellectual, no moral or mental fiber, not even the resilience of wit—only the soft sweetness of decay. Woodberry's poem "O, Struck beneath the Laurel" seems a fitting exemplar and epitaph:

O, struck beneath the laurel, where the singing fountains are,
I saw from heaven falling the star of love afar;
O, slain in Eden's bower nigh the bourn where lovers rest,
I fell upon the arrow that was buried in my breast;
Farewell the noble labor, farewell the silent pain,
Farewell the perfect honor of the long years lived in vain;
I lie upon the moorland where the wood and pasture meet,
And the cords that no man breaketh are bound about my feet.

(Poems, p. 117)
2.

If Woodberry's poetry has been consigned to total oblivion, that of George Sterling misses a similar fate only because the legend of the man calls occasional attention to the fact of the poetry. "Greek" Sterling, the tall, handsome philanderer of San Francisco's bohemian set, disciple of Ambrose Bierce and crony of Jack London, had from his West Coast audience enough acclaim to quench any poet's thirst for success. Harriet Monroe, visiting San Francisco in 1916, heard him spoken of as "the greatest poet since Dante" and was a little shocked to find him (the only living poet) quoted on the triumphal arches of the Panama-Pacific exposition, along with Confucius, Goethe, and Shakespeare. But this amazing reputation never spread far beyond the California state line. What little attention Sterling did receive from the East seems to have come in 1907, as a result of Bierce's press-agentry in his introduction to Sterling's "A Wine of Wizardry," which appeared in *Cosmopolitan* that year. Shortly thereafter, the poetic revolution caught up with and bypassed Sterling, who ended his days still writing fragile and derivative Romantic verse which had no trouble finding its way into the pages of popular magazines. Ill, depressed, and horrified at the prospect of old age, Sterling took his own life in 1926. Miss Monroe's 1916 review of *Beyond the*
Breakers is still an accurate reflection of critical opinion. She condemned his "shameless rhetoric, which often threatens to engulf the theme beyond redemption" and, after noting his weakness for poetic diction, concluded:

The truth is, this sort of pomposity has died the death. If the imagists have done nothing else, they have punctured the gas bag—English poetry will be henceforth more compact and stern—'as simple as prose', perhaps.

Barly impressed with the loftiness of the poet's vocation, Sterling rarely descended to prose and almost never to critical prose. His American Mercury essays on Bierce and Joaquin Miller are personal reminiscences; the little book Robinson Jeffers, The Man and the Artist is half biography and half impressionistic praise; the column "Rhymes and Reactions," which he conducted in the Overland Monthly during his last year, consists mainly of literary small-talk; and his 1926 report on California poetry for Braithwaite's Magazine Anthology is little more than a catalogue. Yet here and there are scattered observations which show clearly, if not in detail, the pattern of his literary ideas.

He submitted much of his poetry to Bierce for criticism and seems to have shared Bierce's conservative, anti-realist view of poetry. His Overland Monthly column took intermittent pot-shots at the modernists; and although he
approved of Jeffers' work, he could still, in the Jeffers essay, speak longingly of a golden age "before the days when 'thee' and 'thou' were crimes, and we made the bad bargain of exchanging emotion for sophistication." In the best genteel tradition he also could accuse Whitman of taking "an almost perverse pleasure in presenting his ideas as shabbily and awkwardly as possible." Even his praise of Jeffers centers about the more conservative elements in Jeffers' work. It is understandable, in light of his own poetic practice, that Sterling should find lines like these characteristic of Jeffers' best:

Thou wilt not, though in heaven, O divinest,  
Endure divided glory, nor too near  
Approach, nor multitude. Alone thou shinest.  
Thou hast precedence in heaven; have it here  
In song, and in my heart that yearns afar  
Above the wave-tops toward thy splendor clear,

On another occasion he had said:

Poetry must abjure every literal and familiar element, accumulate as many images of strange loveliness, and cherish all the past embodiments of visionary beauty, such as the beings of classical mythology.

From the outset of his career, he had shown (in the dedication poem to The Testimony of the Sun) a marked Romantic view toward the writing of poetry:
I tremble with the splendid weight.
To mine unworth 'tis given to know
How dread the charge I undergo
Who claim the holy Muse as mate.

("Dedication," p. 7)

And while this might be dismissed as mere youthful rhetoric, an inescapable convention of literary debut, it is instructive to note what one of Sterling's contemporaries, a young man exactly his age, had said in the same situation seven years earlier:

So, friends (dear friends), remember, if you will,
The shame I win for singing is all mine,
The gold I miss for dreaming is all yours.

(L.A. Robinson, "Dear Friends"; Collected Poems, p. 84)

In the decade 1900-1910 Sterling published two books of poetry: The Testimony of the Suns (1903) and A Wine of Wizardry (1909). Generally speaking, his poetic language did not change greatly from the first book to the second. Some differences exist, however, and these will be noted in their proper place. The language of Sterling's poetry appears at first sight, to be even more conservative than Woodberry's. And it is true that certain aspects of late Romanticism--particularly the euphonic mode, as it has been considered here--did not make as deep an impression on Sterling as on his contemporaries. Likewise the vocabulary of emotionalism, while present in enough quantity
to identify Sterling with that mode, is by no means so common as his use of the abstract and the indefinite. In some ways Sterling's language is closer to the lofty, vague "sublimity" of the late eighteenth century than to the Romantics.

His metric is equally conservative, even in Romantic terms. Fully three-fourths of the poetry in these two volumes is in either blank verse, tetrameter quatrains, or the Italian sonnet. In all but a few instances the tetrameter quatrain is either the "In Memoriam" stanza (abba), the alternate rhyme stanza, or the double-rhyme ballad stanza:

I dream thy tresses float as gold
Spun to a mist of light;
I deem thy voice as sorrow told
In music to the night.

("Poesy," Testimony, p. 26)

Of the sonnets nearly half are in the sestet patterns cdecde and cdcdcd. Only one poem ("A Wine of Wizardry") has the loose emotionalist form of irregularly rhymed iambic pentameter. There are no odes.

The euphonic devices of poets like Swinburne and Lanier made little impression on Sterling's work at this stage. In only two poems, both from the second volume, can the metrical influence of the euphonists be seen. One is "The Cloud," with its mixed iambs and anapests:
Said the cloud, "I am weary of flight  
And the wind's imperious reign:  
I will foil forever his might;  
I will rest from striving and pain;  
I will pass to the peace of night."

(Wine, p. 44)

but even here the original may easily have been Shelley's "The Cloud." "Night in Heaven" is in a modified form of the sapphic:

All the harps of heaven sang in a sudden twilight,  
And the souls gazed each on each in the ebbing of his radiance;  
Low throbbed the chords till their music was of memory  
And the homes of their sorrow-time.

(Wine, p. 83)

No poems in The Testimony of the Suns show evidence of euphonist meter. And in neither book are such euphonist devices as alliteration, the refrain, or internal rhyme noticeable, even all of Sterling's work is--in the ordinary sense of the word--euphonic enough. Toward the end of his life, Sterling made at least one venture into free verse;28 otherwise he remained metrically conservative.

The most notable features of vocabulary in this poetry are the indefinite, the personified abstraction, and the learned polysyllable. All of these, as Chapter Two has shown, are part of the Romantic lexicon. What sets Sterling a little apart from his contemporaries is the fact
that by this time such excesses had been at least partially corrected by a swing toward concretion, the result of Pre-Raphaelite efforts. Here, however, the vague, the remote, and the invisible seem to be deliberately sought as a means of achieving lofty and "sublime" poetry. "The Testimony of the Suns" has, in fact, the loftiest of subjects—the entire universe—so that the occasion to use indefinites like these is common: remote, nameless, eternal, hidden, unnamed, immeasurable, vague, untold, unnumbered, spectral, transitory, ghostly, hidden, ephemeral, unseen, unknown, transient, secret, lost, shadowed, dumb, fleeting, groping, cryptic, mute, invisible, illusive, obscure, infinity, mystery, secret, void, gloom, oblivion.

In more formal poems the bookish vocabulary is extremely high. It seems to be a conscious attempt at impressiveness. One finds not only such rather common poetic polysyllables as inviolable, ephemeral, oblivious, annul, elemental, spectral, immortal, profound, and immutable; but also such words as phalanxes, insuperable, insurgent, potential, abysmal, amplitude, affranchisement [sic], antiphon, quietude, irrevocable, and beatific. Particular favorites are abyss, stellar, and inexorable. This ponderous vocabulary emerges even in love lyrics:

Discerning its abode so fair,
So delicate with all of grace,
I deem thine eyes in truth declare
The inherent soul's abiding-place.
In the second volume, Sterling apparently tried to reduce this class of words, for they are not nearly so conspicuous.

Terms of personification occur in about the same pattern as indefinite and learned words, except that Sterling never needed the justification of a lofty subject in order to personify. "The Testimony of the Suns" alone has about fifty different personifications, some of them appearing several times. Time, Night, Eternity, Life, Power, Love, Death, and Law appear most often; some others are Fate, Change, Lust, Fear, Sorrow, Faith, Hope, Force, Mystery, Silence, Form, Sleep, Oblivion, Day, Mutation, Science, and Permanence. In addition, Sterling capitalized nouns as freely as if he had been writing in German: Deep, Tides, Vast, Past, Ideal, Sword, Guardians, Voices, Will.

The net effect of indefinites, learned polysyllables, and personified abstractions, added to a quite conventional and literary imagery, is that Sterling's poetry often becomes obscure, difficult for the present-day reader to follow. Hence it seems considerably more esoteric and intellectual than it is. This passage from the "Testimony of the Suns" will illustrate:

Eternity, unto thine eyes
In War's unrest their Legions surge,
Foam of the cosmic tides that urge
The Battle of contending skies,
The war whose waves of onslaught, met
Where night's abysses storm afar,
Break on the high tremendous bar
A thwart that central ocean set--

(Testimony, p. 44)

These stanzas intend no more, I take it, than to suggest that interplanetary motion is a sort of eternal warfare. Whatever their meaning, it does not appear to be as profound as the lofty rhetoric would indicate.

A closer link with his generation was Sterling's emotionalist vocabulary. The familiar words are here: the nouns breast, heart, bosom, lips, tears, dreams, peace, desire, hope, awe, gloom, fury, doom, woe, caress, sorrow, pain, grief, love, rapture; the adjectives awful, exultant, enchanted, divine, auster, wrathful, lonely, terrific, forlorn, moaning, weary; and the verbs swoon, haunt, menace, consecrate, brood. Yet Sterling is not, in his total work, an emotionalist. He was devoted to the rhetoric of lofty utterance, and he could well enough express the gentle melancholy of a well-bred Victorian; but he shows more emotional restraint than most of his contemporaries. And though his emotionalist vocabulary is relatively large, the words are not so frequently invoked.

In his use of what I have earlier called the "stage properties" of poetic language, Sterling came closest to his contemporaries. Lavish in his use of the outcry (lo!, ah!, o!, alas!), poetic contractions ('neath, 'twixt, o'er,
'twas, thro', tho', pow'r, flow'r), short forms (list, oft, clime, isle), and the inevitable archaic second person (thee, thou, roost, wouldst, seem'd), he was no more sparing of the other literary tinsel: guerdon, laurels, wraith, sceptre, choral trumpets, pyre, bard, panoply, clay (for flesh), toil, tresses, pyre; lucent, fraught, cumbrous, ghastly, crystallized, ferny, irradiant; molder, travail, illume, sate (for sat), smite, abide, deem; yore, whence, whereof, thereto, and athwart (a special favorite). Such archaisms as empery, gyve, litter, boon, mote, mete, riven, wroth, greaved, fein, sirt, bourne, unhooed, unbegot, and chaunt also are an integral part of Sterling's vocabulary.

That it was difficult for Sterling to bring any sort of blunt, direct language into his poetry is nowhere more clearly shown than in his description of a hunchback as "in rags awry, Awrench and gnarled," ("Pride and Conscience," p. 65). It seems ironic that only through deliberate archaism does he become really clear and direct:

"Did'st master her?" cried one among his lords, To whom the king, reminiscent in his beard, "In twenty years she gat me nine great sons, Greedy for battle." Then, with mournful voice, "Our other nine were daughters," quoth the king.

("The Forest Mother," Wine, p. 37)

Much more typical of Sterling is this vague, melancholy, and conventional language:
Forlorn, as twilight saucens now the hills,
I gaze across the dim and lonely plain
And muse, till musing is at last a pain,
On all the voices of the countless rills,
On all the loveliness unseen that fills
The mountains—hidden beauty lost like rain
On wastes of the unalterable main;
Lost, as a music that the midnight stills.

("The Soul Prismatic," Wine, p. 64)

On the evidence furnished by vocabulary, it would be easy enough to dismiss the syntax of Sterling's poetry as that of traditional poetic rhetoric. Such a conclusion would, however, be only half true. Actually Sterling's syntax is quite unpredictable. As a rule it is highly formal with impersonal subject matter and, in one degree or another, simple and direct with personal subjects. But there are many exceptions, and even on occasions when syntax is informal the vocabulary is likely to be so much the opposite that little has been gained.

"The Testimony of the Suns" best illustrates Sterling's high rhetoric. Manifestly his intention was to define, in poetic terms, the relation of human life to the physical universe—the vast cosmos of planets and stars. Now this is an ambitious purpose in even a very great poet, and Sterling's niche on Parnassus is dangerously near the base. Moreover, the poem itself gives sufficiently damning evidence of his woeful lack of philosophic and scientific knowledge. It is difficult, then, to see how such a poem in Sterling's hands could ever have
been really successful. But the failure is not one of subject alone; it is equally a failure of rhetoric. The language in which Sterling chose to dress his ideas was as far removed from either common or scientific discourse as his subject was beyond ordinary consideration. The result is a series of high-flown but ineffective repetitions, with a concluding section that for all the oratorical grandeur of its diction is inescapably an admission of failure. Not even a better grasp of subject—and Sterling knew no more, apparently, than a little astronomy—could have penetrated such a rhetorical fog as this:

Charged, the immeasured gulfs transmit
[Law's] mandate to the fonts of life,
Inciting to the governed strife
Whereby the lethal voids are lit,

With augment of imperious tides
On vague, illimitable coasts,
And battle-haze of merging hosts
To which the flare of Vega rides.

(Testimony, p. 60)

In Sterling's poetry are all the familiar devices: exclamation, rhetorical question, periodic sentence, and inversion from normal word order. Though frequent enough elsewhere, the exclamation and the rhetorical question occur a total of nearly one hundred and forty times in "The Testimony of the Suns"—or about once every five lines. Usually they appear in clusters:
Capella past thy lonely light
What Guardians rule the changeless void?
What final boon undestroyed
Where seethe the caldrons of the night?

(\textit{Testimony}, p. 76)

the long oratorical sentence, with its periodic structure
and its nests of clauses within clauses, is typified here:

Cold from colossal ramparts gleam,
At their insuperable posts,
The seven princes of the hosts
Who guard the holy North supreme;

Who watch the phalanxes remote
That, gathered in opposing skies,
Far on the southern wastes arise,
Marshalled by flaming Fomalhaut.

(\textit{Testimony}, p. 45)

In Sterling periodic structure is not confined to formal utterance. Here, in the dramatic monologue, "Tasso to Leonora," one finds:

Though death draw down this body, still my soul--
A song between its dawn and eve of time--
Shall turn to thee for memory, and lose,
Unwept, all mead of evanescent joy,
With thee its heritage.

(\textit{Wine}, p. 54)

Instances of inversion can be seen in nearly all the passages above. Sterling was rarely concerned about such matters; under the Romantic dispensation at this stage of its decline, they might be either written off as poetic license or defended as necessary in promoting a distinction
between poetry and prose. Hence the more auspicious the occasion, the more common their use:

What music from Capella runs?  
How hold the Pleiades their bond?  
How storms the hidden war beyond  
Orion's dreadful sword of suns?

(*Testimony, p. 45*)

The main syntactical difference between such poems as "The Testimony of the Suns" and the lyric poetry is that in the latter sentences are shorter and rhetorical questions fewer. Formality still prevails, however. These stanzas are typical:

And certain as the fine and pure  
Accord their gift of fair,  
So sure must sorrow wake, so sure  
Must come the feet of Care.

("To My Sister," *Testimony*, p. 16)

Thou livest yet! Then few the days,  
Altho' they seem not few,  
Since here we watched, on garden ways,  
Thy pure and moonlit dew.

("To A Lily," *Testimony*, p. 116)

By the time his second volume had been written, Sterling was able to achieve—though not often enough—a simplicity that would have bettered his poetry immeasurably, had he chosen to persist in it:

We know that we shall seek her till we die,  
And find her not at all, the fair and far:  
Her pure domain is wider than the sky,  
And never night revealed her whitest star;
beyond the sea and sun her feet have trod; 
her vision is our memory of God.

("beauty," nine, p. 63)

Sterling's role in the development of the concreutive mode was not an important one. In fact, imagery was probably his weakest point. The observation quoted earlier, that poetry must avoid "literal and familiar" things, shows his anti-realistic bias; the further notation that it must "accumulate...images of strange loveliness" shows his alliance with the Pre-Raphaelites; and his final remark about "cherish[ing] all the past embodiments of visionary beauty" indicates his predilection for conventional poetic imagery. In his first volume Sterling's most notable efforts toward concretion were in the long title poem; but here imagery advanced little beyond merely naming stars and constellations: Aldebaran, Capella, Boötes, Betelgeuse, Aigel, Procyon, Spica, the Pleiades, the Lion, the Dragon—and twenty others. The balance of the poem's imagery is that of war, in the traditional miltonic figures of guileons, ramparts, phalanxes, legions, cohorts, and battle-lines. The rest is abstraction and vagueness.

In his lyric poems Sterling's imagery is nearly always conventional, indeed trite:

At her call,
The fauns have fled their slumbering, the nymphs Gleam in their mazy covert of the years,
Deep Arcadies, where all the woodland isles
Aro tremulous of blossom. At her call,
We see again the living rose-and-pearl
Fabled of Paphos, and the hurrying doves.

("Music," testimony, p. 39)

Like Woodberry, he was fond of those hardy romantic perennials, the rose and the lily. Other flowers in his poetry are the iris, the buttercup, the hyacinth, the pansy, the poppy, the daffodil, and the violet; these last, however, appear much less frequently than in Woodberry. Commonly he was satisfied merely with a generic term: flower (or flow'r), bloom, or blossom. Among his "images of strange loveliness" are some precious metals and stones: marble, gold, opal, pearl, sapphire, crystal, topaz—the first four being favorites.

In A Vine of Wizardry Sterling's imagery has clearly undergone some changes. The title poem, lauded both privately and publicly by Ambrose Bierce,29 has a powerful air of fin-de-siècle about it. One of the poet's friends hinted that it was the result of a narcotics experiment—inspired, of course, by Coleridge;30 and Sterling's later reference to the poem as "an imaginative stunt of mine"31 gives some credence to this theory. The example of Bierce's own satanism may also have been influential. In any event, the imagery is nothing if not vivid:

Within a porphyry crypt the murderous light
Of garnet-crusted lamps where under sit
Perturbed men that tremble at a sound,
And ponder words on ghastly vellum writ,
In viper's blood, to whispers from the night--
Infernal rubrics, sung to Satan's might,
Or chaunted to the dragon in his gyre.

(Wine, p. 12)

The imagery is also both consistent and ample. The color
theme of red (from the "wine") has been maintained, indeed,
with almost tiresome consistency. Never again was Sterling
to plunge so deeply into the concreitive mode, but instances
of his experiment crop up commonly thereafter: "poppies
flaunt a silken fire," "lizards twitch along the rocks"
("April Morning"); "jasper evenings of the sea," "violet
foam." ("The Siren's Song"); and

The toad has found a resting place divine,
And bloats in stupor between Ammon's lips.


The idiomatic mode clearly held no appeal for Sterling.
His was a bardic tradition, which found Browning worthy of
respect and homage, but was frank in telling him that

I, in seasons past,
Loved not the bitter might
And merciless control
Of thy bleak trumpets calling to the soul.

("Ode on the Centenary of the Birth of
Robert Browning," Selected Poems, p. 166)

There are only a few indications that Sterling ever tried
to capture the spoken word in his poetry. In "The Lover
Waits" one finds lines like "There's little comfort in the
stars tonight," "I'd sift the constellations for her brow," and "I'll fence with Leath, but love shall have me blind."

His one sustained effort at idiomatic language in this period occurs in "A Visitor." For most of the poem, the idiom is not too far from the naturalness of Frost or Robinson:

John arose
And lit their little nail, and turned the knob;
A man stood tall without, with haughty face,
And costly garments proof against the rain.
Then John: "Come in." At which the stranger shook
from all his height the silver of the storm,
and bared his head, and entered.

(Wine, p. 75)

But the poem breaks down into bathos, as the wealthy stranger leaves and the quarreling couple are reunited in their humble cottage:

but they too rose, re-opening the door
(Wistful to call him back), and saw his form
descend the steps, and heard a grievous cry
from out the dark: "Here I was happy once!
And they two turned, and kissed in sudden tears.

thus Sterling's one effort at realism and directness of language during this period was undermined by Romantic diction and genteel sentiment. After the poetic revolution Sterling was to become a self-conscious reactionary, the champion of a kind of poetry that had, for better or worse, "died the death," as Miss Monroe put it.
Another poet who wooed the conservative muse, possibly with more success than any of his contemporaries, was George Santayana. His career is too well-known to need rehearsal here, except for the reminder that in his early years the famed philosopher was also a practicing poet, with a total output of respectable size. During the decade from 1900 to 1910, however, he published only one volume: *A Hermite of Carmel and Other Poems* (1901), a book which was to be his valedictory, since he published scarcely any new verse after that time. Indeed, had he continued as a poet during the revolution of the next two decades, his work would probably not fall so neatly into the category of the conservative.

Santayana's own modest disclaimers about his poems make any critic of them seem ungracious, for he has anticipated most of the objections that might be raised. His most frequently mentioned limitation was first pointed out and repeatedly stated by Santayana himself:

> How came a child born in Spain of Spanish parents to be educated in Boston and to write in the English language? English, and the whole Anglo-Saxon tradition in literature and philosophy, have always been a medium to me rather than a source.

The fact that the English language (and I can write no other with assurance) was not my mother-tongue would of itself preclude any inspired use of it on my part; its roots
do not quite reach to my centre.... My approach to literature is literary, my images are only metaphors.34

This sort of remark has led an ordinarily astute critic like Horace Gregory to the impressionistic conclusion that Santayana used English "quite as though the language were without an Anglo-Saxon backbone" and that his diction "resembled the ease and 'foreign' inflection of poetry written by the Rossettis."35 In a late essay Santayana explained the situation much better:

I meant rather more than I said when I spoke of English not being my mother-tongue. It is not the vocabulary only that is concerned.... I mentioned the language not being quite native to me; but that was only a symbol for the much more hopelessly foreign quality of the English sort of imagination, and the northern respect for the inner man instead of the southern respect for the great world, for fate, for history, for matter.36

In the same essay Santayana disclaimed the shortcomings of his poetry by the same modest device:

[My critics] study it too technically, they think it more artful and voluntary than it ever was, because in one sense I was a born poet, like Ovid, and lisped in numbers, for the numbers came. Of course, I re-read the scrawl, said to myself that's good or that's bad, and often had a new inspiration, the best things being perhaps my second thoughts, as also in my prose.37

Since Santayana was an esthetician of some magnitude, one
should at least acknowledge here his theories of poetry. I am not equipped to handle them in their broader philosophical context, nor could there in any case be space for such extended treatment. His essay "The Elements of Poetry" (Chapter X in Interpretations of Poetry and Religion must be mentioned, however, for what light it may cast on Santayana's language. In this essay he isolated four elements present in the best poetry: first, the euphonic ("poetry is speech for its own sake and for its own sweetness"); second, the euphuistic ("The choice of coloured words and rare and elliptical phrases"); third, what might be called organized and objectified emotion ("The poet's art is to a great extent the art of intensifying emotions by assembling the scattered objects that naturally arouse them," but "the glorious emotions with which he bubbles over must at all hazards find or feign their correlative objects"); and fourth, what Philip Blair Rice has called the rational imagination.

To repair to the material of experience, seizing hold of the reality of sensation and fancy beneath the surface of conventional ideas, and then out of that living but indefinite material to build new structures, richer, finer, fitting to the primary tendencies of our nature, truer to the ultimate possibilities of the soul.

The last noun is significant: here the soul is not merely emotional but theological, and thus
Religion is poetry become the guide of life, poetry substituted for science or supervening upon it as an approach to the highest reality. Poetry is religion allowed to drift, left without points of application in conduct and without an expression in worship and dogma.45

One observes that the first of Santayana's elements, euphony, has been drawn directly from Romanticism, though he was scarcely a euphonist in the exact sense that this study has used the term. The second, euphuism, appears to come from post-Rossettian, or fin-de-siècle, exoticism. The third, with its mention of the "correlative object," is an anticipation of T. S. Eliot and is Santayana's link with modern poetry. So far as the fourth element relates poetry to reasoned religious beliefs, it is Santayana's own largely unacknowledged contribution to modern critical theory.46 All are important to a study of his poetry, but the fourth is especially interesting since it elucidates certain aspects of Santayana's language. Note how the connection of poetry and religion appears once more in his defense of conventional metric and poetic diction. Speaking about his poems, he observed in 1922:

If their prosody is worn and traditional, like a liturgy, it is because they represent the initiation of a mind into a world older and larger than itself; not the chance experiences of a stray individual, but his submission to what is not his chance experience; to the truth of nature and the moral heritage of mankind.47
There is an elevation... in poetic diction, just because it is consecrated and archaic; a pomp as of a religious procession, without which certain intuitions would lose all their grace and dignity.  

For our purposes it is not so much the actual vocabulary of theology that matters (it is in fact not really preponderant), but the indication that an organized body of ideas, a rationale, motivated his poetry. Hence his remark that "my verses... represent a true inspiration" and his later complaint about critics believing his poetry "more artful and voluntary than it ever was" appear to be further expressions of his modesty.

Santayana's metric has none of the technical innovations that would soon be common to American poetry; but it is quite varied and, though without any striking virtuosity, also quite skilled. He favored especially the sonnet (both English and Italian), several types of four- and five-foot quatrains, and the ode. He also employed the cinquain and the sixain, an original adaptation of the sapphic, and the Spenserian stanza. His dramatic poems are in blank verse. Seldom does metric, or indeed any aspect of euphony, interfere with sense in his poems; the metric is quiet and fluid, as befits a poetry with its emotions so well under control. If the technical high-jinks of Swinburne made any impression on Santayana it is
not evident in this volume. Indeed his fidelity to subject
matter caused him to make rather radical alterations in
form when translating the following sonnet of Michelangelo:

Ravished by all that to the eyes is fair,
Yet hungry for the joys that truly bless,
My soul can find no stair
To mount to heaven, save earth's loveliness.
For from the stars above
Descends a glorious light
That lifts our longing to their highest height
And bears the name of love.
Nor is there aught can move
A gentle heart, or purge or make it wise,
But beauty and the starlight of her eyes.

("gli occhi miei vaghi delle cose belle," p. 1430

For a poetry which one might well expect to be ra-
tional and philosophic, Santayana's vocabulary has a large
element of emotionalism. Some favorite nouns are soul,
heart, sorrow, love, sigh, grief, and pain. Other char-
acteristic words in this group are rapture, horror, doom,
torment, torture, despair, madness, passion; sullen, sad,
wretched, haunted, weary. (Note the predominance of un-
happy emotions.) Also strong is the vocabulary of Romantic
"poetical" terms, fulfilling the poet's observation that
his language was mainly derivative and literary: orb, dia-
tem, vale, dream, nymph, porphyry, coverts, pageants,
mantle, ruins, enchanted, myrtle-crowned, swarthy, wafting,
fragile, cower, murmur; archaisms like hapy, perchance,
wright, carven, quoth, list (for listen), conned, british,
and yore; syllabic augmentations like veined, winged, and
Santayana was not reluctant to use the archaic second person and such poetic contractions as _list_, _oft_, _'twixt_, _'neath_, _'tis_, and _o'er_; but he used them much less often than either Woodberry or Sterling. In an early poem like "Premonition"51 there is a typically Romantic surplus of adjectives:

Our heart strings are too coarse for Nature's fingers
To wake her purest melodies upon,
And the harsh tremor that among them lingers
Will into sweeter silence die anon.

(p. 86)

But in the later poems a simpler style came to prevail:

Our youth is like a rustic at the play
That cries aloud in simple-hearted fear,
Curses the villain, shudders at the fray,
And weeps before the maiden's wreathed bier.

("The Rustic at the Play," p. 124)

The vocabulary of indefiniteness is not lacking in this poetry; it contains such words as _muffled_, _unseen_, _unuttered_, _unutterable_, _secret things_, _vaporous_, _dumb_, _mysteries_, _nameless_, and _eternal_. One will frequently find, however, that context clarifies such words, as in this invocation to a skylark:

Too late, thou tender songster of the sky
Trilling unseen, by things unseen inspired.

("In Grantchester Meadows," p. 114)
Only **things** is really vague. The word **unseen** may be applied literally both times: the bird is high in the air, out of sight; in the second instance, the word refers to the divine, again something literally unseen. The antithesis involved in repeating the word also sharpens its meaning.

Santayana's personifications do not appear too frequently. **Nature** and **fate** occur more than once, but others are rather uncommon. His formalist vocabulary is somewhat larger: **exhalation**, **solitude**, **prelude**, **derision**; **illumine**, **peruse**, **requite**, **blaspheme**; **indomitable**, **unuttered**, **inexorable**, **oppressed**, **unfranchised**, **inscrutable**, and **ignoble** are typical. These may be partly the result of a strong intellectual or philosophic element in the poetry; but, as we have already seen, such words were also part and parcel of formal Romantic utterance.

It would thus appear that Santayana's vocabulary has the same conventional Romantic elements as that of Arnold or Swinburne, or any of a dozen other nineteenth-century poets. But it is with just such poetry as Santayana's that the linguist's dictum about studying words in context becomes significant. His poetic vocabulary, as Santayana was well aware, followed received standards. But unlike Woodberry, he wrote a poetry of ideas; and unlike Sterling, he had his ideas clearly in mind. Hence if his poetry was to convey thought with any precision, Santayana had to
maintain a corresponding precision of language. The dict-
tion of the sonnet below is a case in point. Conventional,
almost trite, it nevertheless has surprising force because
each word is used precisely; and the most emotional words
(divine, false, vain, madness, worshipping, strange, sweet-
ness, etc.) have been sharpened by paradox or antithesis:

What gleaming cross rebukes this infidel?
What lion groans, awakened in his lair?
Angel or demon, what unearthly spell
Returns, divinely false like all things fair,
To mock this desolation? Fleeing vision,
Frail as a smoke-wreath in the sunlight air,
Indomitable hope or vain derision,
Madness or revelation, sin or prayer,
What art thou? Is man's sum of wisdom this,
That he believe denying, and blaspheme
Worshipping still, and drink eternal bliss
Out of the maddening chalice of a dream?
Strange sweetness that embitterest content,
Art thou a poison or a sacrament?

("Odi et Amo - II," p. 121)

Other such evidences of stylistic texture are fre-
quently enough discovered: the paradox of "a little joy
in an immense despair" ("Grantchester Meadows"), the anti-
thesis in "The moving world that feeds thy gift devours,/
And the same hand that finished overthrew" ("King's Col-
lege Chapel"), and the epigrammatic irony of this passage:

Youth dies in man's benumbed soul,
Maid bows to woman's broken life,
A thousand leagues of silence roll
Between the husband and the wife.

("Midnight," p. 113)
yet the same poem is guilty of Romantic excesses like "O heavy lethargy of pain "/0 shadows of forgotten ill!" and "O cruel beauty of the earth "/0 love's unutterable stings!"
The vocabulary at Santayana's disposal simply was not adequate to the demands he placed upon it, and it sometimes failed him. It seems likely that his eventual decision to abandon poetry altogether for prose may have come from a realization that the language of poetry as he knew it was much too limited to express his ideas— in other words, that poetry is a serious business and one cannot lop off heads with a dull guillotine.

Santayana's syntax is also fairly conservative, in the sense that he made use of all the available "poetic" constructions: inversion, the rhetorical question, the superfluous subjunctive, and the elaborate parallelism of the euphonists and the orators. Even so, his work owes much of its celebrated clarity to a controlled syntax. Sentences are usually short, quite often with normal word order. Also, he was much less addicted to the semicolon than Woodberry and Sterling. He commonly wrote closed stanzas, and since much of his work is in quatrains, sentences rarely run over four lines. It is virtually impossible to find in his poems the structural and grammatical flaws that marred a great many Romantic poems: dangling modifiers, missing or ambiguous antecedents, lack of
concord, unnatural separation of related words. Obscurities, when they do occur, must nearly always be attributed to intellectual subtlety rather than to garbled word-order. Hence the syntax remains simple and clear; the "poetic" constructions are no more than ornament; and thought dominates form, as in the sestet of the sonnet, "Futility":

Ah, Mother, little can the soul avail
Unchristened at some font of ancient love.
What boots the vision if the meaning fail,
When all the marvels of the skies above
March to the passions they are mirrors of?
If the heart pine, the very stars will pale.

("Futility," p. 116)

Even in the ode, where sentences normally tend to be long and complex, Santayana remained concise and clear:

I pay the price of birth.
My earth returns to earth.
Hurry my ashes, thou avenging wind,
Into the vortex of the whirling spheres!
I die, for I have sinned,
Yea, I have loved, and drained my heart of tears.
And thou within whose womb,
Mother of nations, labouring Universe,
My life grew, be its tomb.
Thou brought'at me forth, take now my vital seed.
Receive thy wage, thou iron-hearted nurse,
Thy blessing I requite thee and thy curse.

("Resurrection," pp. 134-135)

Gregory and Zaturenska's lively but erratic chapter on Santayana summarily disposes of concretion with the phrase "an absence of concrete imagery," while Santayana's contemporary Jessie Kittenhouse indicated something
of the same when she criticized "the impalpable visions eclipsed in the wan light." Both of these estimates are unjust; they stem less from careful reading than from received opinion about the probable nature of philosophic poetry. Santayana's imagery is neither as opulent as that of Moody nor as solicitously tended as that of the Imagists, but it usually manages to be effective in the same detached, unobtrusive manner as his metric and his diction. In a poem like "Sybaris" it resembles the exotic splendor of the Pre-Raphaelites:

Here stood enchanted palaces of old,  
All veined porphyry and burnished gold;  
Here matrons and slight maidsens sat aloof  
Beneath cool porches, rich with Tyrian woof  
Hung from the carven rafters of the roof.

(p. 89)

In the first stanza of "Midnight" it is clear and plain:

The dank earth reeks with three days' rain,  
The phantom trees are dark and still,  
Above the darkness and the hill  
The tardy moon shines out again.

(p. 112)

And in "Resurrection" its tense, rapid fluttering of images is, despite the conventional diction, rather modern:

Say not I seem  
A shadow among shades,  
A dryad's laugh amid the windy glades,  
A swimmer's body guessed beneath the stream.

(p. 128)
The problem with Santayana's imagery is not its rarity but its all-too-frequent conventionality, which seems to be the result partly of conservative language practices and partly of the poet's admitted bookishness. The following passage is an excellent example of both:

...Endymion, locked in dullard sleep,  
Endured the gaze of Lian, till she turned  
Stung with immortal wrath and doomed to weep  
Her maiden passion ignorantly spurned.

In the lines below, even the felicitous phrase "large heart" cannot overcome the trite artificiality of language:

I thought that I was dead,  
Felt my large heart, a tomb within the tomb,  
Cold, hope-untented,  
Not thankless for this gloom.  

("Resurrection," p. 125)

And although it is not a common feature, the blurred image cluster of the emotionalist mode can sometimes be found in Santayana's poetry:

What fate has cast me on a tide of time  
Careless of joy and covetous of gold,  
What force compelled to weave the pensive rhyme  
When loves are mean, and faith and honour old,

When riches crown in vain men's sordid lives,  
And learning chokes a mind of base degree?  
What wingèd spirit rises from their hives?  
What heart, revolting, ventures to be free?

Their pride will sink and more ignobly fade  
Without memorial of its hectic fire.  
What altars shall survive them, where they prayed?  
What lovely deities? What riven lyre?

("Avila," p. 96)
but the typical mark of conservative imagery occurs in such sequences as this, part of an apostrophe to nature:

Why do thy subtle hands betray their power
And but half-fashioned leave thy finer clay?
Upon what journeys doth thy fancy stray
That weeds in thy broad garden choke the flower,
And many a pilgrim harboured in thy bower
A stranger came, a stranger went away?

("Futility," p. 116)

It seems clear, then, that a willingness to accept the available literary language—Romantic poetic diction at its banal end-point—coupled with an inclination to experience life through literature rather than through his own senses has made Santayana's concretion uneven in quality, unpredictable in extent.

From what has already been said about syntax and vocabulary, one might safely assume that the idiomatic mode did not greatly affect Santayana's poetry. Certain exceptions, however, must be noted: exceptions which will show that neglect of the idiomatic was deliberate rather than the result of ignorance or misunderstanding. The last section of *A Hermit of Carmel* is entitled "Convivial and Occasional Verses"; this little-known group of poems reveals another side of the poet's personality, as well as another approach to poetry. "College Drinking Song" has these lively colloquial strains:
To the games we won and the games we lost,
For we couldn't tell which before we tossed,
And who cares now who paid the cost?

Drink, boys, drink!

(p. 167)

"Six Wise Fools," though rather inconsistent in tone, has such passages as this:

I set my heart on being good,
Believed the Bible to the letter,
Yes, I joined a Christian brotherhood
When I was young and knew no better;
And if I sometimes sinned, I wept
That God's commandments were not kept.
As time went on I understood
That it was wrong to be so good.

(p. 178)

Possibly the best of these, and the most effectively idiomatic, is "Young Sammy's Wild Oats," a satire on U.S. imperialism in the Caribbean. Its literary ancestor is probably Lowell's "Biglow Papers," which satirized a similar set of conditions in the Mexican War. The idiom is New England, and for a man in whom English never took root, it is quite convincing. The same series of events inspired Moody's lofty "Ode in Time of Hesitation" and Hovey's grandiose "Unmanifest Destiny." Santayana's poem strikes a balance between the indecisiveness of the first and the chauvinism of the second, sounding a note perhaps more appropriately comic:
Cousin Sammy's gone a-tooting  
To the Creole County fair,  
Where the very sun's polluting  
And there's fever in the air  
He has picked up three young lasses,  
Three mulattoes on the mart,  
Who have offered him free passes  
To their fortune and their heart.  
One young woman he respected,  
Vowed he only came to woo.  
But his word may be neglected  
Since he ravished the other two.

(pp. 205-206)

But what's freedom? To be bound
By a chance majority.
Few are rich and many poor,  
Though all minds show one dull hue.
Equality we don't secure,  
Hediorcrity we do.

(p. 209)

But for all its idiomatic felicities, this is only light verse. Any similar turn to the idiomatic in serious American poetry would have to wait for fulfillment in poets younger than Santayana.

We have seen in this chapter three kinds of conservative language practice during the 1900-1910 decade. Woodberry's poetry showed the vague and misty language of unchecked emotionalism at its extreme historical limit. Serious writers of verse would not again produce a poetry so completely dependent on the connotations of a small emotionalist vocabulary. In Sterling we have observed the last stages of Romantic obsession with the indefinite and
abstract, resulting in a poetic vocabulary which could not bear the weight of intellectual discourse. Santayana's poetry demonstrates that in the custody of an eminently rational mind and a craftsman's temperament, Romantic diction could prove capable of solid achievement, even though that achievement was limited and unpredictable. For Santayana, and increasingly for the next group of poets we shall examine, the available language simply could not be depended upon to express what poetry at that time needed to say. But that Romantic diction and the emotionalist and euphonic modes by no means died with these conservatives will be amply illustrated in the chapters to follow.
Chapter Four

THE TRANSITION:
MOODY, LODGE, STICKNEY

1.

The poems of William Vaughn Moody, George Cabot Lodge, and Trumbull Stickney best illustrate the transition in America from a fluent but outworn Romantic diction to the halting first words of a nascent new poetic language. The grouping is natural: Harvard classmates and close personal friends, they have in their poems, as in their educations, aspirations, and ideas, much in common. They were the avant-garde of their day (along with Ridgely Torrence and the more fortunate Robinson), but they have suffered an eclipse in reputation that would doubtless have surprised them all. Ironically enough, Stickney, the most obscure of the three in his lifetime, has the solidest reputation today.

Of course, as both Henry Adams and Santayana have pointed out,1 none of them lived long enough to fulfill his promise. Moody died at forty-one, Lodge at thirty-six, and Stickney at thirty—the first two, indeed, died virtually on the eve of the "poetic renaissance." But what they might have done is another matter. Their actual
achievement is our concern here. Despite the less than
just treatment they receive from Gregory and Zaturenska,
these were three serious, intelligent, and on the whole
highly talented poets whose attempts to come to terms
with their world in poetry were no less determined than
the more successful efforts of Robinson and Pound. They
find few defenders today, but at least one thoughtful man
of letters has paid them (along with Santayana) the trib-
ute that their efforts deserve. Howard Mumford Jones says
of them, in part:

In language that seems to us old-fashioned
but that is nonetheless passionate and sincere,
a group of younger writers—Trumbull Stickney,
George Cabot Lodge, George Santayana, and Wil-
liam Vaughn Moody—were struggling with the
same problem as were the men of the twenties
and the thirties. For them, as for the last
generation, all the primary assumptions had
collapsed. Heirs of a Christian tradition with-
out Christian belief and of a cultural tradi-
tion without any central mytho-poetic core,
they lived in a universe eroded by the advance-
ment of natural sciences. Unlike the moderns
...these writers affirmed a faith in humanity
opposite to the negativism of later days. 2

A less sympathetic critic revealed the other side of the
coin, the essential weakness of this group. Louis Unter-
meyer, discussing in 1919 the conservatives who either
survived the poetic revolution unscathed or wrote as if
it had never taken place, alluded to

...a fast-growing coterie of writers that
come to grief by attempting to be both bour-
ggeois and bolshevik....Many of our best known
and most respectable poets, following the lead of Sidney Lanier and William Vaughn Moody, have been caught in the strange currents that have almost engulfed them. Uneasy in their conservatism, they have grown to be dissatisfied traditionalists; vacillating between a romanticism which they distrust, they falter; unable to choose either one and lacking the power to combine both.3

We may expect to find in these three poets, then, various kinds of indecision in matters of language. All of them worked toward freshness and originality of expression, but for each there was an irresistible urge to return, after whatever tentative ventures through the linguistic unknown, to the easily available comforts of romantic diction. Their indecision about language was so acute, in fact, that it caused unevenness not merely between poems but frequently between parts of a poem; hence the accuracy of Gregory's observation4 that Stickney shows to best advantage when quoted in short passages. But for all their wavering—indeed partly because of it—they demonstrate more clearly than any of their contemporaries the change poetic language was undergoing in this period of "interregnum."

Few American poets have begun their careers so auspiciously, with so nearly unanimous approval from critics and reviewers, as William Vaughn Moody. From the appearance of his first verse drama, The Masque of Judgment, in
1900, to the posthumous collected Poems and Plays of 1912, with its reverent introduction by Professor J. M. Manly, one must look long and searchingly to find more than incidental censure, less than enthusiastic praise. William Morton Payne's Dial eulogy is extreme but nonetheless characteristic: "He was a poet by the grace of God, and such a poet as had not been raised up before him in America—or even in the English-speaking world—since the eclipse of the great line of the older singers." During the years after his graduation at Harvard in 1894, through his intermittent but successful academic career at the University of Chicago and his sudden, brief success as a Broadway playwright, Moody's name became synonymous in America with literary genius. More than one critic seriously proclaimed him a virtual reincarnation of Keats. But the two or three years following Moody's death were a high-water mark for his reputation. After that came a decline, and in the forty subsequent years the reputation has steadily dropped until now Moody stands, a little pathetically and not altogether justly, in the ranks of the "early modern" one-poem poets, with Markham, Lizette Reese, and Kilmer.

Moody, like Sterling, apparently either lacked the critical impulse or managed to keep it fairly well under control, for he published practically nothing in the way
of literary theory. His introduction to the Student's
Hilton, while for its time scholarly and sound, is chiefly
biographical; and his essay on Trumbull Stickney
concentrates on Stickney's poetic dramas, especially their ideas.

Only now and then in letters to friends did Moody drop a
revealing remark about the craft of poetry. That he had
conservative leanings can be discerned in his remarks about
realism and folk-poetry, two important concerns of forward-
looking writers at the turn of the century. Of Yeat's
experiments with the latter Moody believed that "A self-
conscious attempt to assimilate and reproduce what is itself
the very essence of naïveté, is bound to be a cancelling
business." He seems to have disapproved of realism in
fiction as well as in poetry; he dismissed Robert Herrick's
novels as "heartless" and lacking humanity; he found
Norris immature; and he preferred Howells' prose fantasies
to the realistic novels, remarking,

How impressive it is to see how almost
all earnest minds, and exactly by reason
of their earnestness, have sooner or later
to abandon the realistic formula, or at
least to so modify it that it ceases to
have any meaning qua realism.

Another remark about Yeats reveals an interesting prefer-
ence, one that shows Moody's affinity with the emotionalists
and their love of the indefinite:

Yeats' Shadowy Waters I have read before,
but shall read again with interest; it is
very watery and shadowy. Both of these epithets are intended to be complimentary. 13

Yet Moody felt himself to be a rebel of sorts. In a frequently-quoted passage, he rebuked his friend Mason for unconservative conservatism regarding poetic language:

You are not tolerant enough of the instinct for conquest in language, the attempt to push out its boundaries, to win for it continually some new swiftness, some rare compression, to distill from it a more opaline drop. 14

But the passage indicates a conflict of attitudes. Matthiessen suggested 15 that the significance of the statement lay in its closing phrase; and surely there is more than a metaphorical inconsistency between the poetic "opaline drop," with its connotations of cloudiness and opacity, and words like "swiftness" and "compression." As analysis of Moody's poetry will show, he was willing enough to experiment with the direct statement, the colloquial phrase, the unconventional or realistic image; but as he has here expressed it, his concept of pioneering in language seems to be little more than an extension of fin-de-siècle exoticism.

Moody's metric departs from the Romantic norm, in the sense that he tried to avoid certain popular Romantic forms (the sonnet, the ballad stanza, the Spenserian stanza, the pentameter couplet), treated others rather
frailly, and evolved a number of his own stanza patterns.

While Whitman's plea for organic form did not move him, there can be little doubt that he felt the existing tradition of prosody confining. All his metrical innovations, however, fall within traditional limits. "Road Hymn for the Start," "Heart's Wild Flower," and "The Brute" have the galloping rhythms of the euphonic mode:

When he splashed through the brae
Silver streams are choked with clay,
When he snorts the bright cliffs crumble and
the woods go down like hay;
He lairs in pleasant cities, and the haggard people fret
Squalid 'mid their new-got riches, soot-begrimed and desolate.

("The Brute," *Poems and Plays*, I, 56)

One notes also, in his careless use of the Scotticism, brae, a characteristic euphonist flaw: the readiness to forego clarity or precision for the sake of sound; its only purpose, apparently, is to rhyme with clay and hay.

His more conservative patterns are generally better: such forms as the nine-line stanza of "Gloucester Moors", the augmented ballad stanza of "A Grey Day", or the modified *rime royal* of "Song Flower and Poppy":

To purple vineyards looking south
On reaches of the still Tyrrhenian;
Virgilian headlands, and the mouth
Of Tiber, where that ship put in
To take the dead men home to God,
Whereof Casella told the mode
To the great Florentine.

(I, 86-87)
Though a number of his dramatic and narrative poems are cast in blank verse, Moody, like many nineteenth-century American poets, favored the shorter tetrameter line for lyrical expression. His frequent use of the irregular ode is another link with the past, though its function in such records of personal emotion as "The Daguerreotype" and "A Prairie Ride" is to give a fluidity of expression much like free verse. The wide range of metrical forms encountered in Moody's work indicates that he was willing to experiment, to explore new metrical territory, and that had he lived to see it, the vers libre movement would not have found him altogether unsympathetic.

A reader steeped in present-day poetic idiom, the metaphysical-Symbolist-realist language of modern verse, would probably not find Moody's vocabulary much different from that of his contemporaries: "literary" and emotional, with strong traces of fin-de-siècle fustian. Yet in his day Moody's critics and reviewers were struck more than anything else by what they felt to be unusual powers of language--powers, in fact, capable of running amok and creating an idiom too rich and opulent, ultimately too obscure. Such stricutures are familiar enough in our time, directed at Eliot, Pound, Stevens, Crane, and Thomas; but we find their application to Moody a little surprising. Yet his language is at times highly individual and (by late Romantic standards) original enough to be obscure.
It is not Moody's opulence, which was considerable, but his inconsistency that finally enervates his language.

The base of his vocabulary is that of Romantic poetry: a vocabulary that can be found in Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, Coleridge, Rossetti, and numerous other lesser figures. Predominantly it is a language of the emotions: joy, passion, despair, awe, anguish, ecstasy, truth, sorrow, hate, shame, love, tears, soul, heart, spirit, bosom; agast, distraught, awful, divine, lonely, wild, stern, delicious, noble, proud, moaning, sinister, disastrous, wailing, sullen. Like the other emotionalist vocabularies we have seen, it is also indefinite: misty, mystical, shadowy, obscurely, nameless, immemorable [sic], secret, vague, dim. From these words Moody had a group of favorites: di (also a basic adjective in Keats' early poetry), sweet, dear, wild (sometimes wilding), proud; love, desire, rie, passion; fling, tremble; the basic emotionalist nouns soul, heart, and spirit; and the adverb very.

Other elements of Romantic diction also figure heavily in Moody's work. Such poetic forms as the archaic second person in pronouns (thee, thou, etc.) and verbs (thou'lt, cling'est, goeth), syllabic augmentation of regular participles (tranced, blessed, drained, despised, dissolved, poolèd), the literary short forms (clime, marze, one, iales, 'twixt, 'neath, 'tis), and the outcry (loî!, shî!, Oî!, alasî!) all are frequent. So are the other familiar Romantic stage
properties: nouns like pinnacle, idolon, twain, shade (for spirit or ghost), chalice, ensign (for flag), guerdon, boon, votarist, emprise; adjectives like vain, noisome, moiling, odorous, primal, mighty, visionary, deathless; verbs like fling, tremble, abide, assoil, smite, descry, and slay.

Woody was especially fond of the more recondite archaisms, words like flaggel, meinie, shawns, bastion, carven, broderies, gaud, unmeet, blooth, tean, couchant, and trine, as well as more common terms like ruth, rue, snake, anear, and old. Less frequent but quite as noticeable are such learned polysyllables as ensanguined, sidereal, immemorial, jubilant, phylacteries, expugnable, inextricable, implacable, dislaureled, antediluvian, and prescience. Finally one must note a group of words that have always troubled Woody's critics: the coinages and other terms so unfamiliar they virtually amount to new words. Of the first we find words like savorous, nodosities, blemishment, and jestress (female of jester); of the second such terms as neap and water-arum.

Left at this, Woody's vocabulary would seem little different from that of several dozen Romantic poets. A more accurate estimate depends on closer examination, and for two reasons. One has been mentioned before: the fallacy of quoting out of context. In some instances the vocabulary will be justified by circumstances. The other reason is that, by the very nature of twentieth-century
poetry, it would be difficult to cite as counter-evidence lists of words characteristically "modern." The new poets of the early twentieth century were rebelling against just such a formulization; they sought catholicity of language, as well as content and form; the more advanced among them simply refused to believe that certain words and constructions were inherently "poetic." Hence modern poetry, even that of an indecisive transitional figure like Moody, must be examined in larger segments than the word, if its uniquely modern flavor is to be determined.

Actually Moody had at least three vocabularies, all rooted in a Romantic base but varying widely. One was the emotionalist vocabulary, which he used for the grand manner, as in his well-known "Ode in Time of Hesitation":

Alas! What sounds are these that come
Sullenly over the Pacific seas, --
Sounds of ignoble battle, striking dumb
The seasons half-awakened ecstasies?
Must I be humble, then,
Now when my heart hath need of pride?
Wild love falls on me from these sculptured men;
By loving much the land for which they died
I would be justified.

(I, 18)

The emotionalist vocabulary also expressed personal emotion, as in "Jetsam" or "Heart's Wild Flower":

Out of her changing lights I wove my youth
A place to dwell in, sweet and spiritual,
And all the bitter years of my exile
My heart has called afar off unto her.
Lo, after many days love finds its own!

("Jetsam," I, 49)

Tonight her lids shall lift again, slow, soft,
with vague desire,
And lay about my breast and brain their hush
of spirit fire,
And I shall take the sweet of pain as the laborer
his hire.

("Heart's Wild-Flower," I, 71)

Here he appears at his most conservative, harking back to
the early Romantics.

Another vocabulary was the ornate. This could be
euphuistic (to use Santayana's term) in the Pre-Raphaelite
tradition:

Those heights of flame and dew,
Gleaming far westward, lock Arcadia in;
And where the olive-mottled gulf burns blue,
The Muses' mount, with silver summits twin,
Shines o'er the violet steep that Delphi clings
unto.

("The Moon-Moth," I, 157)

It could also, though less often, mimic the language of
euphonists like Swinburne or Kipling:

For about the noisy land,
Roaring, quivering 'neath his hand,
His thoughts brood fierce and sullen or laugh
in lust of pride
O'er the stubborn things that he
Breaks to dust and brings to be.
Some he mightly establishes, some flings down
utterly.

("The Brute," I, 55)

In such poems as these--others are "The Golden Journey,"
"The Death of Eve," and "On the River"--Moody impresses one as a typical poet of the nineties: a decadent Romantic. Most interesting of all is his idiomatic manner. A life-long interest in the drama gave Moody more incentive than most for working with the human voice. But here, as elsewhere, he was inconsistent. When writing poetic drama he used a lofty language alternately reminiscent of "Samson Agonistes" and "The Cenci." He apparently despaired altogether of producing successful verse plays on contemporary themes, since he turned to prose for "The Great Divide" and "The Faith Healer." This same indecision is reflected in his other dramatic and quasi-dramatic poems. In "A Dialogue in Purgatory" the speakers are not persons but literary characters, with a dignified but unrealistic literary idiom:

Brother, 't were sweet your hand to feel
In mine; it would a little heal
The shame that makes me poor,
And dumb at the heart's core.

But where our spirits felt Love's dearth,
Down on the green and pleasant earth,
Remains the fleshy shell,
Love's garment tangible.

(I, 95-96)

"Until the Troubling of the Waters" (apparently an early attempt to cast "The Faith Healer" into blank verse), has an idiom alternately flat--as in the first passage below--or sentimental, as in the second:
Alice had lit the lamp before she went; her day of pity and unmirthful play was over, and her young heart free to live until to-morrow brought her nursing-task again, and made her feel now dark and still that life could be to others...

(I, 36)

Just before midnight baby fretted, woke; he never yet has slept a whole night through without his food and petting. As I sat feeding and petting him and singing soft, I felt a jealousy begin to ache and worry at my heartstrings....

(I, 39)

Only perhaps in "The Menagerie" did Moody manage the kind of colloquial directness that Browning had achieved and that Robinson was improving upon:

Thank God my brain is not inclined to cut such capers every day! I'm just about mellow, but then--There goes the tent-flap shut. Rain's in the wind. I thought so: every snout was twitching when the keeper turned me out.

.............
I'll foot it home, to try and make believe I'm sober. After this I stick to beer, and drop the circus when the sane folks leave. A man's a fool to look at things too near: they look back, and begin to cut up queer.

(I, 61)

But even here, Moody could not sustain the tone. An early reviewer, his old Harvard professor, Lewis L. Gates, pointed out in 1901 that "the wabbling of the imaginary speaker's language from godlike eloquence to gutter argot is greater than even the fumes of his much bad whiskey can account for." And while we might today prefer the gutter argot.
to the godlike eloquence, we must be unusually tolerant
to approve of the "little man in trousers, slightly jagged"
speaking first as he does above, and then virtually in the
same breath, like this:

Here, round about me, were her vagrant births;
Sick dreams she had, fierce projects she essayed;
Her qualms, her fiery prides, her crazy mirths;
The troublings of her spirit as she strayed,
Cringed, gloated, mocked, was lordly, was afraid.

(I, p. 64)

Moody's intense but frequently misguided sense of
language shows at its best when he could keep it under
restraint, a feat he rarely attained through an entire
poem. In passages like these, he is nearly a major poet:

Or shall a haggard ruthless few
Warp her over and bring her to,
While the many broken souls of men
Rester down in the slaver's pen,
And nothing to say or do?

("Gloucester Moors," I, 7)

I wonder how that merchant's crew
Have ever found the will!
I wonder what the fishers do
To keep them toiling still!
I wonder how the heart of man
Has patience to live out its span,
Or wait until its dreams come true.

("A Grey Day," I, 80)

Where the low morning made a mist of light,
The Garden and its gates lay like a flower
Afloat on the still waters of the dawn.
The clicking leap of bright-mailed grasshoppers,
The dropping of sage-beetles from their perch
On the gnawed cactus, even the pulsing drum
Of blood-beats in their ears, merged suddenly
Into ethereal hush.

("The Death of Eve," I, 137)

In his entirety he appears as somewhat less than major.

To the end of his career Moody wavered between the
old and the new in matters of vocabulary, but his syntax
shows a development away from the inflated rhetoric of the
grand manner in the direction of idiomatic directness. In
his first volume the long, rumbling period, the literary
inversion, and the rhetorical question abound: he was at-
ttempting to be poetic at all costs.

And of these hearts my heart was one:
Nor when beneath the arch of stone
With dirge and candle flame
The cross of passion came,

Did my glad spirit feel reproof,
Though on the awful tree aloof,
Unspiritual, dead,
Drooped the ensanguined Head.

("Good Friday Night," I, 8)

But mine is not the failure God deplores;
For I of old am beauty's votarist,
Long recreant, often foiled and led astray,
But resolute at last to seek her there
Where most she does abide, and crave with tears
That she assoil me of my blemishment.

("Jetsam," I, 54)

The parallelism of the euphonists had also made its mark
here and there:

Leave the early bells at chime,
Leave the kindled hearth to blaze,
Leave the trollised panes where children linger out the waking time,
leave the forms of sons and fathers trudging through the misty ways,
leave the sounds of mothers taking up their sweet laborious days.

("Road-symph for the Start," 1, 12)

Such rhetoric had reached a culmination years earlier; it could still occasionally rise to moving eloquence:

How limb both mingle with dissolved limb
In nature's busy old democracy
to flush the mountain laurel when she blows
sweet by the southern sea,
and heart with crumbled heart climbs in the rose.

("Ode in time of hesitation," 1, 20)

But the syntax of the Romantic grand manner, as well as its vocabulary, more closely resembled oratory than poetry; and the age had already begun to find oratory suspect. In the poems written after 1901, one finds evidence that if Looby had not altogether reformed his vocabulary, he had at times clarified his syntax. Sentences are somewhat shorter; normal word order is more common; the rhetorical question and the inversion are harder to find. The pattern could be as clipped as this:

'it was not yet night, but night was due;
The earth had fallen chalky-dun;
Our road dipped straight as eye could run,
Between the poles, set two and two,
And poplars, one and one.

Then rose to where far roofs and spires
Etched a vague strip of Norman sky:

("Old Pourquoi," 1, 121)
It could hover between the colloquial and the literary:

I never knew how good
Were those happy fields and farms,
Fell, leaning from her horse, she stretched her arms
to greet and to receive them; nor for all my knowing did I know her womanhood
Until I saw the gesture understood, and answer made, and amity begun.

("A Prairie Aide," I, 148)

It could assume the steady, unpretentious marching of oral narrative:

You know how hunger, accident, disease, ambush and open battle wore us down, how schism split us, envious leadership stitched into rivulets of little head the stream and onset of our expedition; how some for love of women, some for sloth, some for a taint of wiliness in the blood, some brain-sick, or with dreams of savage rule, fell off from us and mingled with the tribes.

("The Fountain," I, 167)

What vitiated Moody's growing powers of organization and structure was his reluctance to use a vocabulary equally straightforward, so that a carefully-wrought poem like "Song" loses its directness in a welter of vague Romantic diction:

My love is gone into the East
Across the wide dawn-kindled sea;
My love remembreth naught of me
Nor of my lips nor of my breast
For he has gone where morning dwells
Into the land of dreams and spells.

(I, 151)
and whenever emotion overwhelmed sense, he had a fatal
tendency to slip back into the grandiloquent periods of his
early poetry:

but whither, flame of pearl, vapor of pearl,
breath and decantment of sea-buried gems
that with the foam-born Woman did upswirl
to wreath their brightness round her breast
and limbs
and give their color to the cup that dims
Earth's piercing cry to music,—whither now
To the weighed wings intend?

("The Moth-Moth," I, 163)

"Metaphor was his natural vehicle," Matthiessen has
said of Moody; and the appraisal is accurate. Certainly
for sheer lavishness, none of his contemporaries but Pound
can equal Moody's imagery. Few poets since Keats have been
so alive to shape, sound, odor, and especially color, in
the two worlds of reality and fancy. His was not, however,
a purely esthetic imagery; it could picture the real as
well as the gorgeous:

Beyond my roofs and chimney piles
Sunset crumbles, ragged, dire;
The roaring street is hung for miles
With fierce electric fire.
Shrill and high, newsboys cry
The gross of the planet's destiny
Through one more sullen gyre.

("Song-flower and Poppy," I, 87-88)

And though it is not characteristic of his style, he could
also sustain and develop successfully an extended metaphor:
When I look back and say, of all our hours
this one or that was best,
straightway, from north and south, from east
and west,
with banners strange and tributary powers
the others camp against me. Thus,
now for many nights and days,
the hills of memory are mutinous,
hearing me raise
above all other praise
that autumn morn

("A Prairie Hide," I, 147)

But again his conservatism prevented a complete realization of his gift. He was a typical decadent Romantic in his refusal to consider metaphor anything more than a decorative external; rarely in his work can one find the integration of image and idea characteristic of the best Romantic, the best modern verse. Shortly after Moody's death Professor Charlton Lewis presented a convincing case for Moody as a Symbolist; but the influence came certainly through the watered-down English Symbolism of Symons and the early Yeats, not the powerful mainstream that developed from Poe through Baudelaire to Laforgue, Corbière, and Rimbaud. Moody's symbols, while well sustained in some poems ("The Quarry," "The Brute," "The Menagerie," "Old Pourquoi," "Thammuz"), are traditional and literary; they are good Romantic symbols but show no advance over Tennyson, Rossetti, Swinburne, or the fin-de-siècle poets. And placed beside the best work of Whitman and Melville, Hopkins and Hardy, Moody's symbolic techniques appear
Moreover, his conventional language produced triteness in much of his imagery. In "The Daguerreotype," for example, he could find no better image to represent his life's achievement than

The dusty amphoras where I had stored
The dribblings of the wine press of my days.

(1, 108)

And his depiction of a Mediterranean city is like a passage from a guide book or a second-rate adventure novel:

The motley town where Turk and Greek
Spit scorn and hatred as I pass;
Seraglio windows, doors that reek
Sick perfume of the mass;

The muezzin cry from Allah's tower,
French sailors singing in the street;
The Western meets the Eastern power,
And mingles -- this is Crete.

("The Second Coming," I, 113)

Frequently he can make situations concrete only at second hand, through the imagery of classical literature: his poems abound with trembling lyres, saffron sails, brazen doors, fleet goddesses, and golden isles.

What needs to be said about Moody's use of the idiomatic mode I have mentioned in the discussions of his vocabulary and syntax. For the sake of summary, however, it might be repeated that he was aware of a trend in poetry
toward the simple, direct language of speech, that he made certain sporadic efforts to write poetry in this manner, but that an uneasy conservatism drove him back to the eloquent and florid, the traditionally "poetic." In "The Menagerie" Moody struck a note of idiomatic directness, of anti-romantic realism; and it may be true, as Thomas Higgs claims, that

"The Menagerie" is only one poem, and an atypical poem at that. Moody's work, considered as a whole, advanced the position of the idiomatic mode only a little. His friend Robinson, as we shall see, was laboring on that project.

2.

Readers of Henry Adams' Education or Van Wyck Brooks' New England: Indian Summer will recognize the name of George Cabot Lodge as belonging to a poet of the "twilight interval." They may also know him as the son and the father respectively of two politically eminent Henry Cabot Lodges. Beyond this, they will find virtually no trace of him in the chronicles of twentieth-century literature. Such total submergence of reputation is, of course, common
enough in literary history. But that it should happen in so brief a time to a young man much dedicated to his art and apparently well-equipped for major poetic accomplishment give rise to some questions. What was Lodge's relation to the poetry of his time? What, if anything, aborted the promise of the only man to whom Theodore Roosevelt "would apply the rare name of genius"? What was his attainment as a poet? And, finally, what role did his now forgotten poetry play in the language revolution that during this first decade of a new century was already in progress?

Let us look first at the poet's own comment. Lodge was another poet who apparently found literary theory unimportant, except as it applied to his own work. So far as I have been able to determine, he wrote no critical essays whatever; his comments on poetry may, like Moody's, be culled only from his correspondence. It is clear, however, that in theory he was free of literary conservatism. According to Henry Adams, his biographer, "he loved Walt Whitman to fanaticism"; and, unlike most of Whitman's other admirers at this time, Lodge also imitated him. His admiration for Swinburne was as great as any of his contemporaries', but he also appeared to recognize Swinburne's master when he called Baudelaire "really a great poet, one of the torch-bearers." His tribute to Henry James deserves fuller quotation not only because of its remarkably
modern ring, but also for its evidence that Lodge had the
raftsman's high regard for artistic performance:

In ideas and art he lives in a palace built of his own time and thought, while the usual,
you might say the ubiquitous average person and literary prostitute lives contentedly in one
of an intemisible row of hovels, built, so to speak, or an endless contract from bare mater-
ial stolen from line's intellectual scrap-heap. What it all amounts to is that, whether you
like James or not, whether you think he is all on the wrong track or not, you are bound to
respect him, for if you do not, whom, in this age of universal machine-made cheapness, whom
more than James with his immense talent and industry and his small sales, are you going to
respect?

In the matter of poetic language Lodge, again theo-
retically, had rather advanced views. Early in his career
he was language-conscious enough to complain of feeling
inarticulate, a plight seldom experienced by the full-
Fledged Romantic:

My implements are still so rude—my ideas
seem luminous and limpid while they are word-
less, and I think, owing to practice, most
ideas come to me now wordless—but in words
they become crude, misty, and imperfect.

Some years later he made this more pointed observation
about literary language:

I become so increasingly convinced that...
artistic perfection depends upon the degree
to which the artist speaks his own words in
his own voice and is unhampred by the vocab-
ulary of convention and the megaphone of ora-
tory....The whole core of the struggle, for
ourselves and for art, is to emerge from the envelope of thoughts and words and deeds which are not our own, but the laws and conventions and traditions formed by a kind of composite of other men's ideas and emotions and prejudices.26

But a long shadow would fall between the desire and the consummation; for while Lodge could temporarily shake off the "vocabulary of convention," he could never abandon the "megaphone of oratory." Even more than Moody he seems to have longed for the mantle of greatness, in the traditional sense: lofty utterance of broad and dignified themes. Hence his subject matter would not allow him for long to wear rhetoric's neck or to speak like a man among men. Yet there is considerable evidence that he tried.

If metrical virtuosity alone entitled a young poet to fame, Lodge's reputation would be secure. The three volumes of non-ramatic poetry27 he published between 1900 and his death in 1909 attest his skill as a technician. One finds a large number of original stanza forms, countless variations on the Italian sonnet, and even several sonnets in tetrameter. There are at least two variations of the open-cadenced Whitman meter, one of which runs as follows:

My pity,--all its justice, vista, faith
How utterly din, unguessed, or briefly seen
As tho' a starred night thro' a wall's interstice
Glimpsed or sea-view caught between the crouching hills,--
Also appealing to Lodge and used by him in many poems was the quasi-classical long line of Swinburne and Lanier:

Lands of imperial sun, lands of enduring fruition,
Lands where abundant the wine perfumed the madness of youth,
Lands where the women and men flamed in the vernal ignition,
Gained through the shadows of sense rays from the ultimate truth.

("The Song of the Sword," I, 16)

He also faithfully imitated Swinburne's sapphics, even to subject and phraseology, in "Ad Servam." Another sign of his independence in prosody was his relatively infrequent use of the tetrameter quatrains; five and six-line stanzas seemed to serve his purposes better.

That he retreated to the familiar Romantic ode and to blank verse in his longer poems is evidence that to Lodge matter was of more importance than manner. Yet his "Ode to the Sea" is perfectly regular, indeed in a rather intricately rhymed stanza:

Soon shalt thou feel the miracle of light
Soft as the distant music of a shell;
The voice that creeps around the world to-night
Breathes from long vistas of deciduous years,
Since first thy bitter waters void of sight,
Sterile of seasons, on earth's valleys fell
As fall like darkness in the soul the bright
Burden of life's insuperable tears.

(I, 161)
Lodge's last two volumes show an increasing conservatism--a tendency to work either with patterns familiar from long use, like the sonnet, or with forms that make least demands on free expression, like blank verse or these irregularly rhymed iambics of "Love in Life":

Since always by how much we give
Of life and love and thought and power and faith,
By so much and no less we love and live,
Find and possess the soul,
And, reassured of life, confront the goal,
Fearful of no betrayal after death....

(II, 121)

Despite his metrical skill and inventiveness, Lodge was no finicking prosodist. He was frequently willing, as most of the poets in his time were not, to alter metric when he had a special purpose for doing so. His venture into the tetrameter sonnet has already been mentioned; also significant was his use, for serious poetry, of feminine rhyme (solitude-multiplicity, captivity-felicity, over us-marvellous, pole to pole - aurorole), as well as eye-rhyme (food-good, earth-hearth, home-come) and approximate rhyme (faith-death, God-blood, sun-upon). One must conclude, however, that few of Lodge's metrical experiments were really new in the sense that Pound's, Williams', and Eliot's have been; he kept, though restlessly, within the tradition.
Lodge's vocabulary exhibits more clearly than any other poets' all the flaws and virtues of the age. Not that it is in the worst sense typical; it is a very large vocabulary, reflecting his remarkable energy and enthusiasm; it ranges over the entire available lexicon of Romantic poetry and beyond. All of Romanticism is in it, but some of the new poetic realism is there too. Although Lodge was basically a poet of ideas, he was likewise a child of the nineteenth century; thus his ideas often appear in a context of emotionalist language: love, soul, joy, rapture, anger, heart, kiss, faith, sorrow, shame, despair, passion, breast, ecstasy; sweet, sad, lovely, fearful, passionate, perilous, pitiless, exultant, joyless, effusive, fervent, vibrant, shuddering; murmur, rave, laugh, grieve, caress. Soul and Faith, two basic philosophic terms for him, often are personified. A trace of the mystic in Lodge partly, but not altogether, explains his equally heavy reliance on the indefinite—words such as infinity, nothingness, vast, vague, countless, hidden, distant, trackless, unknown, fathomless, inarticulate, strange, unspeakable, illimitable, muffled, measureless, endless, incommunicable, untransmissible, and his favorite, ineffable. One may be thankful, at least, that the shopworn adjective, dim, was used but rarely by him.

Somewhat less abundant in Lodge than in Moody are the "stage properties" of conventional poetry; but the fact
that Lodge wrote on a higher level of abstraction than Moody helps to account for this. He was by no means averse to such language, however. In his poems can be found much of the familiar tinsel, among it the nouns guerdon, avatars, gem, diadem, diapason, minstrelsy, galaxy, pageant, labyrinth, lyre, paean, myriads, panoplies, parapet, chaplets, argosy, scimitar, gyres, lute, and the Whitmanic vistas; the adjectives Icarian, darkling, rant, majestic, bossed (for embossed), dauntless, ensnared, lambent, abysmal, and bereft; the verbs carouse, hark, smite, transfigure, exalt, and bide. His archaisms include fain, peradventure, drave, caravel, perforce, puissant, brake (as verb), ken, and notwithstanding. One reason that Lodge's poetry seems less dated than that of others is his avoidance of the archaic second person. Generally it appears only in the love poetry and in very long formal efforts like "The Soul's Inheritance" and "Pilgrims," but even then its use is not consistent. Likewise he made scant use of poetic contractions and syllabic extension. Such symptoms of a move toward natural speech patterns were important, however small they might seem.

The most prominent feature of Lodge's poetic vocabulary--few of his reviewers ever missed it--is an abnormally high number of aureate words. Most of these are, naturally enough, of classical origin and the majority are abstractions. I cite this large selection to stress both
their number and their range: resurrection, infidelity, felicities, endurance, meditation, extravagance, vigilance, reliquary, vicissitude, solitude, multitude, palimpsest, antiphon, interval, consciousness, monotony, obscurity, inheritance, recognition, dissolution; perennial, prodigious, imperishable, illustrious, incredible, inviolate, unreconciled, grandiloquent, gigantic, omnivorous, transcendent, fantastic, transfused, consummate, immemorial, sacramental, celestial, circumscribe, indefectible, commensurate, transfigured; indubitably, inseparably, innumerably. Hardly a line of the poetry is without such a word; in fact, Lodge often used them as rhyme words. Learned language, then, makes up his basic vocabulary: it is as essential to his poetry as melodic words to Woodberry's or vague words to Sterling's. And perhaps this fact more than anything else accounts for the peculiar neglect of Lodge. By writing philosophic poetry in an era still ruled by prettiness, he forfeited the acclaim of his own time; by the espousal of an aureate diction he offended a later age; and by his scamping of concrete imagery, he lost the attention of both his own age, imbued as it was with Pre-Raphaelite notions, and that of the ensuing Imagist decades.

There is, however, another part of Lodge's diction that merits attention: what in later years would have been called a vocabulary of social protest. From his earliest
days a rebel against conventional ideas (he and Henry Adams were a two-man political party, the "Conservative Christian Anarchists"), he frequently expressed in verse his dissatisfaction with the world of affairs. Here are some of the words in this social poetry: sin, ignorance, prison, freedom, martyr, fetters, lies, slaves, chains, laws, obedience, safety, comrades, cant, greed, crime, shame, motives, rule, vice, respectability, blood, sweat, labour, factories, mines, justice, birthright, outcasts; sordid, social, stupid, blasphemous, abortive, reeking, tyrannous, monstrous, suffer, starve, pillage, control, forfeit, cheat. Conventional and literary as much of the language is (he had only Shelley and perhaps Clough for models in this lofty kind of rebelliousness), it nevertheless points to the social realism of Sandburg and the proletarian poets, in general to the not-so-lovely world of actuality—a world that poetry in the first decade of the century badly needed to see, hear, and smell. With the exception of Robinson, none of Lodge's fellow poets in this period had found a way (if, indeed, many cared at all) to fuse poetry and reality. This was, at any rate, a start.

"Lodge never received that priceless gift of literary art, a simple, clear, understandable style" wrote a reviewer for the Literary Digest in 1911, and the state-
ment is just. What Lodge's abstract vocabulary began in the way of clouding his style was completed by the exalted oratorical syntax in which he chose to write most of his poetry. With Lodge, certainly, the grand manner was better justified than with Woodberry or Sterling, who constructed orotund periods around flower gardens and landscapes; but though it was charged with intellectual power, Lodge's poetry would not survive the modernist attack on poetic rhetoric launched by Verlaine, encouraged by Yeats, and carried on by a whole generation of young poets. All too soon this kind of syntax would seem not only pompous but unnecessarily complex and diffuse:

Surely as, when the firmamental airs
Grow, in a warm and lovelier noonday, sweet
With flowers thy fruitful bosom bears,
Forth from thy visted memories flow
Thy life's unnumbered days that tread with
ghostly feet
Thy large and dreadful slumber, so
Seen in the truth of thine essential mood,
All things that were return and none can die
Save for the ends of life.

("Ode to the Earth," I, 164-165)

Even in the spare and demanding sonnet form, rhetoric crept in:

How shall the burning heart of Truth be won?
Whence shall the light of revelation shine?
When shall the mind's discernment grow divine?
Where shall the soul's immortal deeds be done?

("Days," II, 84)
The euphonists also left their mark on Lodge's syntax, especially in the early volumes. Their verbosity, their melodic repetitions, and their overworked parallelism can be seen in such a passage as this:

Comes the delicate rapture of crimson as mute and intense as the dream of a passionate deed,
Comes the miracle faultless as fire and fierce as a heart where desire is sown as a seed,
Comes the glow like a prayer on the lips of a prophet whose eyes are aflame with the vision of God,
Comes the flush like the solemn delight of the love that can awaken a soul in the brute or the ciöd.

("A Song for Waking," I, 123)

Here and there also one can detect the loose, rolling syntax of Whitman, as well as his diction and subject matter:

I, journeyed on in paths by them untrodden,
On seas unhinted in their charts, their indications, prophecies,
After an age of years turning, resume, interpret:
These now with negligent arms about my neck,
Grave heads against my breast, deep eyes to mine,
Come face to face at last, at last acclaim me!

("The Journey On," I, 169)

But anything more direct than Whitman would probably have seemed bare and prosaic to Lodge. Late in his life he wrote enthusiastically to his mother about "The Noctambulist," indicating that he had made "both in thought and form, a really new and large and valid departure." The poem bears enough similarity to "Captain Craig" to show...
that Lodge was attempting to reduce his rhetoric and write in a plain style; yet he could be no more consistent than this:

Yes, I was young, I grant you!—Ah, but what if now, despite all wisdom and the years, Youth's first resolve, in life and spirit still held stedfast unto death? I ask you, then Might not the heart within me, greatly glad,— Almost with pride, as one who sees the gold Of day-break glinting in his sunset skies,— Revive its by-gones?

(II, 145-146)

On the very rare occasions when he could forsake the grand manner, Lodge was capable of an unadorned style of great directness and power:

I marked the hours beat by beat
And felt the silent night depart:
I held her, dead against my heart,
Beside the loud, incessant street.

Across the daylight drenched with rain
I heard the world's familiar strife
My fingers held the pulse of life
That ran the shaking scale of pain.

("At Daybreak," I, 218)

But the habit of speaking in a large voice was apparently too great for Lodge to break.

In mentioning earlier the remarkable lack of imagery in Lodge's work, I did not wish to imply that his poetry is totally without concretion. On a reduced scale, his imagery follows patterns that will be familiar to the reader by now. One is the Pre-Raphaelite splendor of
roses and lilies, jasper and chrysophrase, violet wave and
creamy foam:

O South-wind, silvered by the crescent moon,
Breathe on my shadowed sail and carry me
Homeward across the sunset-coloured sea,
The rose and violet of the calm lagoon.

(No. XV, "The Great Adventure--Life," II, 19)

Another, the sensuality of fin-de-siècle and its self-
conscious satanism:

Soft, sombre hair--strange sweetness of my Love--
Clear, rose-pale, sensuous lips, and white, small
breasts
Set spaciously asunder...

("Life in Love," II, 110)

With ravenous lips men scorch my lustrous flesh
And crowd the quivering dusk with nameless sin;
Death takes them, still insatiate, from my mesh.
Viewless, my feet push down the one who dies,
While, sprung aloft from earth he feasters in,
I watch the last-born laughing in mine eyes!

("Sonnets of Ishtar--II," I, 186)

Finally--inevitably--we see the rhapsodic mixed metaphors
of an earlier mode:

I am the heir to Time's exceeding dower;
Ease me, thou minstrel of the changeless theme!
Now while the midnight yields the mystic flower
Of moondawn, violent as a sanguine stain,
Like love's desire that in night's loneliest hour
Dawns thro' the empty twilight of a dream,
Mend with thy music-threads of faith and power
Life's raiment ruinous with surmise and pain!

("Ode to the Sea," I, 160-161)

Yet hidden here and there are felicities of imagery
that hint at high imaginative powers: "the crawling ice-
floes of oblivion," "the candid foliage wet with light,
[the dark] "shuddering seaward from the tawny plain," and

In Time's cathedral Memory, like a ghost  
Crouched in the narrow twilight of the nave,  
Fumbles with thin pathetic hands to save  
Relics of all things lived and loved and lost.

(No. XX, "The Great Adventure--Life," II, 24)

Ultimately Lodge's preoccupation with ideas led him to
neglect the sensuous aspects of his poetry. As a result
the language of concretion in his work is too often con-
ventional, perfunctory--an ornament added almost as after-
thought.

Lodge felt he was breaking new ground with "The Noct-
ambulist"--perhaps adding his contribution in the new man-
ner of Moody's "The Menagerie" and Robinson's "Captain
Craig." But, as I have indicated, this venture into the
idiomatic mode was marred by his refusal (or inability) to
set aside rhetoric. Lodge's talent was great, but by this
time his energy had waned. At best he could only imitate
Robinson:

But I--
I've turned the Cosmos inside out!" he said;
And on his lips the shadow of a smile
Looked hardly human: "...Inside out!" he said.
And we said nothing;

(II, 143)
Once briefly, in the sonnets to Stickney's memory, he had recorded an authentic voice—perhaps the cultured, ironic tones of Stickney himself—but in any case an idiom he knew:

"At least," he said, "we spent with Socrates Some memorable days, and in our youth Were curious and respectful of the Truth, Thrilled with perfections and discoveries. And with the everlasting mysteries We were irreverent and unsatisfied,— And so we are!" he said.

(No. XX, "The Great Adventure--Death," II, 69)

With a style such as this, Lodge might have been able to rescue his ideas from rhetoric and shop-worn diction. But the later poetry is proof of his stubborn allegiance to the grand manner.

Lodge's contribution to his age was not so much in the actual poems he left but in the example he set—his persistent effort to write a poetry of ideas and to cope, however Romantically, with the unpleasant facts of modern life. The language of his early poem, "Aux Modernes," is a little old-fashioned, but its pessimism has become so integral a part of the modern literary mind that we scarcely realize how radical it must have seemed to New England readers half a century ago:

Only an empty platitude for God, Only for poetry a jangling nerve, Only for life the baser lusts to serve, Only a fashion where the function stood. Only a shadow stealing span on span Over the unmeasured whiteness of the soul;
Darkness around the God-established goal
That blazed before the innocence of man.
And when the flame of adolescence breaks
On some wild heart the world has overthrown,
He stares as one who waits alone and wakes,
Cheated of love and faith, his vision drawn
Haggard and hopeless from his death-bed down
The hard, gray, tacit distances of dawn.

(I, 95)

3.

The transitional poet whose work now seems to have
the best chance of survival is Trumbull Stickney. Though
curing his lifetime few beyond his circle of Harvard
friends knew him as a poet, Stickney's frail legend has
been kept fitfully alive through the half-century since
his untimely death. Rittenhouse, Aiken, Untermeyer, and
Van Doren have all reprinted his work in anthologies of
modern poetry; the New Criticism, in the person of R. P.
Blackmur, has examined his work; and Van Wyck Brooks,
by reviving his memory briefly in New England: Indian
Summer,32 inspired an enthusiastic New Republic essay by
Edmund Wilson in 1940.33 A good indication of Stickney's
present standing is the fact that in Matthiessen's 1951
revision of the Oxford Book of American Verse only he,
Moody, and Robinson represent the long stretch between
Lanier and Masters—some thirty-five years.

That Stickney was an unusually brilliant young man
can hardly be doubted. All his friends—Adams, Santayana,
Lodge, and Moody—have borne witness to the fact. And all his critics have ended their observations with the familiar, wistful question: what great poetry might Stickney have produced, had he lived longer? Holder of a Doctorat ès Lettres from the University of Paris (the first Anglo-Saxon, it is said, ever to receive the degree), Stickney had spent his entire maturity as a student and was never able to give undivided attention to his verse. Yet he once told Moody—and he was not a man given to self-revelation—"the truth is, I care for nothing but poetry." His work, imperfect as it is in spots, would seem to confirm his devotion, for it shows strong evidence of attempts to fight off the sterile, exhausted Romantic tradition. But, like Moody and Lodge, Stickney was not daring enough; too often was he tempted back to the easy poetic stereotypes of his age. Blackmur's judgment may be harsh, but it is not unfair:

He simply had not reached the point where, no longer a pouring-out into existing greedy form, poetry becomes, with some sacrifice of self-expression, a difficult objective act. He had not taught his verse to make demands of him, and in turn he demanded little of his verse but platitudes. There is nothing like a platitude for sincerity; but for new force it needs restating or at least re-setting.

Stickney rarely expressed himself on matters of literary theory. Two of his reviews, however, evidence the
direction his esthetic was taking. Each of these reveals, in its own way, a remarkably advanced critical position. In 1900, while he was still a student in Paris, Stickney reviewed Antonio Fogazzaro's *Il dolore nell' arte,* a work which defended an idea sympathetic to the Romantic doctrine of emotionalism: "il dolore nelle opere d'arte si tramuta in piacere." Stickney's argument was not so much with the truth of this belief, but with the contemporary practice of it by poets. In examining their sorrows publicly, he felt, they had become a formalized cult, whose utterances were obscure and artistically sterile:

> Percio non si bada...alla natura....
> grave d'essere arrivati a questo punto; ma purtroppo la sorte è generale e la cultura nei centri intellettuali non è altra che una serie di conferenze in frak, ove a forza d'illusioni si stordisce un pubblico impaziente de cogliere nel signo.

And he concluded by citing Lucretius to the effect that public exhibition of personal sorrow was no more than "piacere dell' egoista." Thomas Riggs sums up Stickney's position as follows: "the pangs of the transitional figure are not noble and not tragic; self-revelation--in daylight, in full view of the public--is bad poetic strategy, and an esthetic which condones it is to be attacked." From this it would appear that Stickney had little sympathy for decadent Romantic agony.

Of course such an attitude might also have been mere
conservatism. Stickney's review of Robinson's *Captain Craig* should, however, clear up any misconceptions in that respect. *Captain Craig* had been given a lukewarm reception by reviewers, and Stickney's praise of it alone implies an advanced attitude toward the development of a new poetic idiom. Aware that conservatives would reject much of the book as "prosy" or "unpoetic," he defended its plain language in this perceptive note on form:

The test of all forms of expression lies not in their resembling other forms, but in their proving adequate to the thought. Otherwise literature would be a long commentary on the classics, whereas the commentary can be left to scholars, while the classics grow more varied and more numerous. The fact that much poetry past and present is written in what professors of rhetoric call an elevated style, does not necessarily condemn authors who use plain Saxon. The metrics of Milton and Browning do not banish loose and smooth versification. The English sonnet is not bound to be serious, lyric, and climatic.*42

One feels only regret that so promising a critic as this has left so little. It will soon become evident, however, that as a poet Stickney was often unable to throw off the "verbal fatty degeneration"*43 of decadent Romanticism with such force and directness as he did in criticism. His aims were commendable, if we may judge by these two essays, but his poetry wavers between old and new, stale and fresh.

Stickney's metrical experiments do not differ in kind from those of Moody and Lodge; all are operant within the
received tradition of nineteenth-century verse; all tend, after sampling various forms, to return to the same favorites: blank verse, the sonnet, the tetrameter quatrain. We observe in Stickney, however, some new experiments. *Terza rima*, for example, appears in three poems from the collected works. 44 A more important and far-reaching experiment is his effort to write stanzas with lines of varying lengths, especially short lines:

```
The year for you and me
Is nearly done.
The leaves there, two or three,
Are brown.
Not a bird sings.
It is time to think of other things.

("Eride--III," Poems, p. 64)

Thou hadst thy will.
How weary sounds the rain!
The firelight wanders in the window-pane.
Thou art still.

("Dolorosa," p. 38)

Indeed I'd not have lived elsewhere
Nor otherwise,
Nor as the dreary saying is
Been happier,
To wear the love of life within my eyes.

("In Summer," p. 22)
```

Both the deliberateness and the frequency of such experiments lead one to believe that Stickney was trying, with the aid of a careful metric, to avoid the kind of rhetorical excess so vitiating to Lodge's work. In lines of one or two feet and with an intricate stanza form, it was
simply impossible to wax oratorical. And the fact that many of these short-line poems are too flat and unemphatic is less important than the fact that they are a departure from the work of Stickney's contemporaries. Note the difference between these stanzas and the irregular ode: one demands careful statement, the other allows almost total license of expression.

But, as one might expect, Stickney failed to be consistent. Though only a little influenced by the Swinburnian mode of long galloping lines, he followed the fashion of his period in writing exclusively Italian sonnets; and on a few occasions he reverted to the Romantic irregular ode. The frequency of tetrameter quatrains is another indication of his uncertain conservatism. Yet he was willing at times to alter metric for the sake of meaning, as his casual rhyming will indicate (birth-hearth, fugitive-survive, owl-soul, call-interval, devise-paradise, shade-said). Perhaps his very inconsistency, his timid and uncertain approach to new forms, accounts for the failure of these forms to sustain their content. Yet as an antirhetorical gesture, an American equivalent of Verlaine's revolt, they have historical importance.

This poem, prefacing the lyric sequence called "Bride," suggests not only Stickney's language dilemma but that of the whole period:
Dull words that swim upon the page
Thro' filmy tears of joy and pain!
Poor silly words, my only gage!
Poor words, recurrent as refrain!

Ye prove me language less than nought
And all the loss of utterance.
Ye give me scraps of withered thought
And sounds that meet as by a chance.

If I should find ye once again,
If you should come again to me,
Dull words about my joy and pain,
Mere words, what would ye signify?

(p. 50)

Bateson has noted that ornateness and general verbal excess are symptomatic of a distrust of language, a feeling that words cannot ever be the precise measure of ideas and emotions. At the end of the last century poets had motive enough for such an attitude. What their Romantic predecessors had done, by stressing the connotative values of words and ignoring their denotations, was to erode language—to destroy both effective connotation and denotation. Hence it was necessary, if one wished to be heard, to pile up these "dull words," "scraps of withered thought"—to exaggerate and over-emphasize. Writing poetry was like driving nails with a rubber hammer.

In England dissatisfaction with the language had come much earlier. The Pre-Raphaelite and fin-de-siècle failing for archaisms and exotic imagery can be explained, for example, as an expedient in strengthening poetic language by simple importation. Likewise the Swinburne-Lanier euphonic
mode tried to add strength by exaggerating the musical possibilities of language. Dialect verse, too—both American and English—was an expedient, a return to the "grass roots" of language. What never, apparently, became quite clear to Stickney and his group was that poetic language needed a still more drastic purification. Stickney felt only unrest, although his verse shows that he felt it keenly at times. So acute, in fact, was his uncertainty about language that he constantly wavered from precise, taut expression to the banalities of emotionalism and back again. When Stickney speaks for himself, said Edmund Wilson, "the troubled, the all but inarticulate, opacities give way to a straight beam of verse—actual, inevitable, distinct." But when he speaks in the tongue of decadent Romanticism his verse is indistinguishable from that of a hundred other "twilight" poets.

Descending to particulars in the matter of Stickney's vocabulary, one observes that he used a large number of emotionalist terms. These are typical: love, lover, sweetheart, darling, dear, soul, desire, ecstasy, delight, happiness, heartache, comfort, laughter, grief, despair, pain, sorrow, fear, woe, desolation, frenzy, wailing, fright; kissed, trembling, lonely, delicious, dearly, tender, shy, poignantly, softly, desirous, unhappy, melancholy, dreary, desolate, horrid, miserable, cruel, disheartened, awful; kiss, enjoy, marvel, sympathize, sigh, abhor. It can be
seen that most of them are the conventional terms of rom-
antic or courtly love; and in fact the vast majority of
Stickney's emotionalist terms occur in his love poetry.
When controlled the language sounded like this:

Alone I saw her that one day
Stand in the window of my life.
Her sudden hand melted away
Under my lips, and without strife
I held her in my arms awhile
And drew into my lips her living smile,—

("Once," p. 8)

otherwise it could become as banal and sophomoric as this:

Forgive my fear,
But--darling--hold me fast!
A little while the heartache will be past.
Patience, dear.

("Dolorosa," p. 38)

In most of the other poets we have seen so far, the
emotionalist vocabulary was accompanied by an equally large
group of indefinite words. Stickney's language is notable,
I think, for its dearth of these terms. He did employ words
like endless, infinite, unnumbered, unknown, innumerable,
shadowy, vaporous, vague, fathomless, shapeless, and strange,
but not habitually and never in clusters, like Lodge. Little
of the poetic mist surrounds his work.

Somewhat more frequent but still controlled in a way
that would have been impossible for Lodge or Sterling are
abstractions, especially the polysyllables of classical
origin. In his meditative poems--principally the sonnets--
one can find such words as antiquity, processional, multitudes, unison, presentiment, oblivion, solitude, gratitude, immortality, interval, magnificence; antiphonal, infinite, sanctified, incandescent, enamoured, unreconciled, immured; tantalize, distinguish, and reprimand. Yet their frequency is much less than this list might indicate. Also, few of them are extremely bookish words, and many are part of the common English vocabulary.

Stickney's use of the other conventional poetic vocabulary elements is, though inconsistent, rather common. Thy, thou, thine, and thee are found in poems of love or tribute; forms like 'twixt, 'twas, 'twere, o'er, 'fore, o'er, 'bove, 'iated (belated), tow'rd; transfixed, curied, and dispersed can be found often, though (inevitably) most often in the deliberately archaic dramatic monologues. Poetic trappings like aureole, guerdon, scimitar, frothing beaker, viol, sward, argosies, laurels, minstrelsy, diadem, and sepulchre crop up with moderate frequency, as do their related modifiers and verbs, words like pristine, gibbous, bestrewing, plashing, vespertine, fain, commingled, seraphic; bide, tarry, chide, desory, one, and sunder. Like Moody, Stickney had a taste for such esoteric archaisms as frore, waxen (for grown), yestern, catch (for song), donjon, and awound, as well as the more familiar anon, yore, yon, aye, methinks, and the verb forms grave and brake.

Merely listing Stickney's vocabulary, however, will
not show adequately what directness it was sometimes cap-
pable of. One of his best-known poems, "Mnemosyne," il-
lustrates this freedom from the Romantic curse of emotion-
alism, vagueness, rhetorical pomp, and abstraction:

It's autumn in the country I remember.

How warm a wind blew here about the ways!
And shadows on the hillsides lay to slumber
During the long sun-sweetened summer-days.

It's cold abroad the country I remember.

The swallows veering skimmed the golden grain
At midday with a wing aslant and limber;
And yellow cattle browsed upon the plain.

It's empty down the country I remember.

I had a sister lovely in my sight:
Her hair was dark, her eyes were very sombre;
We sang together in the woods at night.

It's lonely in the country I remember.

(p. 29)

Edmund Wilson's commentary on this first half of the poem
has said all that is necessary: "the words here are per-
fectedly simple; there is not a 'poetic' word among them;
but each of these lines presents a scene with remarkable
completeness and beauty. This spareness and simplicity
of language that carries a charge of meaning is quite un-
like the decadent romanticism that reigned at the end of
the century."

Little of the social realism that animated Lodge
seems to have affected Stickney. In fact his poetry, ex-
cept for the dramatic verse, is rarely concerned with
humanity in the large. In only one poem, the sonnet, "Six O'Clock," did he make any effort at social protest. And while his characteristic uncertainty led him into rhetoric and sentimentality at the end of the poem, his language is still plainer and more concrete than most of Lodge's social protest poetry. The indications of what Stickney might have done in this mode are clear:

Now burst above the city's cold twilight
The piercing whistles and the tower-clocks:
For day is done. Along the frozen docks
The workmen set their ragged shirts aright.
Thro' factory doors a stream of dingy light
Follows the scrimmage as it quickly flocks
To hut and home among the snow's gray blocks.--
I love you, human labourers. Good-night!
Good-night to all the blackened arms that ache!
Good-night to every sick and sweated brow,
To the poor girl that strength and love forsake,
To the poor boy who can no more! I vow
The victim soon shall shudder at the stake
And fall in blood: we bring him even now.

(p. 208)

Coming to the problem of Stickney's syntax, one is not faced with the rather simple situation found in Moody: a matter of vacillation between two modes, the simple and the rhetorical. Here the pattern is much advanced; one finds a consistent effort toward a plain, unaffected style analogous to, if not clearly derived from, the spoken voice:

With thy two eyes look on me once again.
Since certain days, I know not how it is,
I feel the swell of tidal darknesses
Climb in my soul and overwhelm my brain.
Today is Spring, I know that it is Spring.
The new-mown hay about the lilac bush
Sweetens the morning wind, and there's a flush
Of roses leads the garden's offering.

(No. XVII, "Later lyrics," p. 184)

And certainly one must look far to discover in Stickney
any of the verbosity and circumlocution common to poetry
of this time. There are, as Moody observed, "deeper
abysses of feeling than are advertised." Hence it is
not a lapse into the grand manner that one finds trouble-
some but brief, awkward deviations from the pattern above.
They erupt frequently: a grating inversion, or an unneces-
sary distortion of word order in a passage otherwise col-
loquially simple:

Take me out of the earth that I remain not
To tell to gossips in a hovel tales
Of what I was. I who have squandered cannot
Play with the scales.

("Ralston," p. 41)

One look you gave was twice a sky.
I kissed your hand, you said a word
That greater is for melody
Than all the tides a coast-land heard.

("Eride—l," pp. 55-56)

Apparently Stickney was not always able to reconcile the
warring demands of eloquence and directness; possibly he
was also not master of the metrical forms he used.

Some of the sonnets and other meditative verses have
a syntax more nearly formal; still it is rarely high-flown.
here is the opening passage from a late sonnet:

Alone on Lykaion since man hath been
Stand on the height two columns, where at rest
Two eagles hewn of gold sit looking East
forever; and the sun goes up between.
Far down around the mountain's oval green
An order keeps the falling stones abreast.

("Mt. Lykaion," p. 202)

In the dramatic monologues both syntax and vocabulary were purposely archaic:

How fresh her lip is graven on my heart.
I see her, palely, but tell me, who knows--
Is she not waxen, like me, somewhat old?
For something long has happened. All's ago.
I was ages ago, and in the world
We were together young.

("Lodovico Martelli," p. 36)

A certain courtly eloquence, in fact, appears very pleasing in Stickney, when accompanied by enough restraint of diction:

Soft be your journey as a bird's
Who, feeling winter whet the air,
Gyres and from the zenith there
Slants infinitely down southwards
On outspread wings
And sings.

("Dedication," p. 176)

Stickney's critics have all mentioned the fragmentary beauty of his work—the isolated passages where he became for a brief moment a major poet. A great number of these passages owe their success to Stickney's really rare gift for compressing language into vital, exciting images. It
was a genuine achievement, in a time when metaphor served mainly as external décor, to produce a unified image-series like this:

That day her eyes were deep as night.  
She had the motion of the rose,  
The bird that veers across the light,  
The waterfall that leaps and throws  
Its irised spindrift to the sun.  
She seemed a wind of music passing on.  

("Once," p. 8)

or to transmute the cheap glitter of Pre-Raphaelite finery into real jewels:

Be still. The Hanging Gardens were a dream  
That over Persian roses flew to kiss  
The curled lashes of Semiramis.  
Troy never was, nor green Skamander stream.  
Provence and Troubadour are merest lies.  
The glorious hair of Venice was a beam  
Made within Titian's eye. The sunsets seem,  
The world is very old and nothing is.  
Be still. Thou foolish thing, thou canst not wake,  
Nor thy tears wedge thy soldered lids apart,  
But patter in the darkness of thy heart.  

([untitled], p. 92)

Of course this sort of accomplishment could not be kept up; and in other places the imagery is no more than conventionally ornate:

There sinks the sun in dusts of sulphur glowing  
Gibbous and red; and flaking toward the shore  
Like hosts of scarlet willow-leaves bestrewing  
The sapphire floor.  

("Ralston," p. 42)

Sometimes the images were derivative. These appear to
come from the Ancient Mariner:

I, in my lonely boat,
A waif on the somnolent lake,
Watching the colours creep and float
With the sinuous track of a snake.

Now I lean o'er the side
And lazy shades in the water see,
Lapped in the sweep of a sluggish tide
Crawled in from the living sea;

("In the Past," p. 9)

At other times they were merely pretty, in the manner of
Alarich, Stedman, Gilder, and Woodberry:

A bud has burst on the upper bough
(The linnet sang in my heart to-day);
I know where the pale green grasses show
By a tiny runnel, off the way,
And the earth is wet.
(A cuckoo said in my brain: "Not yet.")

("Song," p. 40)

Now and then, as emotion overwhelmed Stickney's sense of
decorum, images could become embarrassingly trite:

Hereafter I'll call you Spring,
Little girl!
And christen each clustering
Delicate curl
Some lovely meadow's name
In the South,
Where they say that music and youth
Stay the same.

("Erie--I," p. 53)

But the poetry, in any event, was concrete. Stickney,
to a degree beyond all his contemporaries, thought in
images. By comparison, Lodge's work seems pale and vague,
Woody's gaudy and contrived. Of course it must be realized that Stickney avoided the large, abstract intellectual issues which absorbed his two friends. Hence the danger of over-abstraction was not as great, nor was the temptation to mix metaphors in the familiar Romantic manner when rhapsodizing on large subjects. Stickney could, however, take an abstraction and clothe it consistently:

Leave him now quiet by the way
To rest apart.
I know what draws him to the dust alway
And churns him in the builder's lime:
He has the fright of time.

I heard it knocking in his breast
A minute since;
His human eyes did wince,
He stubborned like the massive slaughter beast
And as a thing o'erwhelmed with sound
Stood bolted to the ground.

(No. XXVIII, "Later Lyrics," p. 198)

In the second stanza is the characteristic functional metaphor of modern poetry; the language mannerisms (alway, did wince, o'erwhelmed) are a little antique, but the object does not describe the idea ("the fright of time"); it is the idea. And in this often-quoted fragment, written shortly before Stickney's death, one can see again--through the Elizabethan diction--a similar process:

Sir, say no more.
Within me 'tis as if
The green and climbing eyesight of a cat
Crawled near my mind's poor birds.

("Dramatic Fragments--V," p. 312)
The image assumes even greater poignancy when one learns that Stickney died of a brain tumor.

His most sustained achievements in the concretive mode, however, were in his descriptions of landscape. Curiously modern in this respect, he had the expatriate's brooding interest in European scenes, as the first poem entitled "In Ampezzo" shows:

Whilst high around and near, their heads of iron
Sunken in sky whose azure overlights
Ravine and edges, stand the gray and maron
Desolate Dolomites,--

And older than decay from the small summit
Unfolds a stream of pebbly wreckage down
Under the streams of midday, like some comet
Struck into gravel stone.

.............

And all these lines along the sky that measure
Sorapla and the rocks of Mezzodi
Crumble by foamy miles into the azure
Mediterranean sea:

(pp. 26, 28)

The scene below reveals some of Stickney's familiarity with Paris, where he lived for eight years:

Now in the palace gardens warm with age,
On lawn and flower-bed this afternoon
The thin November-coloured foliage
Just as last year unfastens lilting down.

And round the terrace in gray attitude
The very statues are becoming sere
With long presentiment of solitude.
Most of the life that I have lived is here.

("Erde--V," p. 75)
His landscapes were not always passive "views." This coastal scene captures with rare felicity the violent beauty of the sea:

The gray tide flows and flounders in the rocks
Along the crannies up the swollen sand.
Far out the reefs lie naked—dunes and blocks
Low in the watery wind. A shaft of land
Going to sea thins out the western strand.

It rains, and all along and always gulls
Career sea-screaming in and weather-glossed.
It blows here, pushing round the cliff; in lulls
Within the humid stone a motion lost
Ekes out the flurried heart-beat of the coast.

("At Sainte-Marguerite," p. 194)

Although he avoided the grand manner in his poetry whenever possible, Stickney was still too much of a formalist to accede entirely to the idiomatic mode. His vocabulary took its stock from available Romantic sources, but his syntax was (except for the occasional awkward lapses mentioned) direct and natural, often close to the idiomatic. His early allegiance to Browning evidently taught him something about the place of the spoken language in poetry. "Onepiropolo," "Lodovico Martelli," and "Requiescam" are all obviously patterned after Browning:

Nethought I heard, I heard indeed a door
Noising—and near. I threw'r aside. "By Christ,
A snare! Now bless me—where's my sword, my mask?
"I love thy soul," she sang. "Is't Bembo?" "No."
"The whorish trade!" Her shaking hand she put
In mine. The step grew living near. I drew.
Then most superbly on the threshold poised
An all-black cavalier, save in the mask
Two fires.

("Lodovico Martelli," p. 34)

But he seems to have forgotten the lesson learned from Browning; in his verse drama Prometheus Porphyrros, the fragments of the Emperor Julian play, and the Cellini "dramatic scene," he resorted to that Elizabethan idiom which hamstrung the otherwise promising revival of poetic drama in this period. And in the "Dramatic Fragments" written just before his death, Stickney seemed to be moving even further away from living speech cadences. This passage, for example, is an interesting imitation of Shakespeare, but it bears little relation to the idiomatic language of the twentieth century:

Time's a circumference
Whereof the segment of our station seems
A long straight line from nothing into naught.
Therefore we say "progress," "infinity" --
Dull words whose object
Hangs in the air of error and delights
Our boyish minds ahunt for butterflies.

("The Soul of Time," p. 310)

One might be more willing to accept Stickney as a contemporary if he had written more poems in the unpretentious manner of this stanza:

I love to see the rolling sod
Mixing and changing ever grow
To other forms,--and this is God
And all of God and all we know.

("Driftwood," p. 44)
He was too much a child of the nineteenth century, however, to move for long in the uncharted wilderness of the "unpoetic." Like his friends Lodge and Moody, Stickney could never push very far beyond the familiar charted territory of Romanticism; and although he and his friends made some interesting small discoveries, they were in the end drawn irresistibly back to the tradition. Dissatisfied they certainly were, but not rebellious; and to meet the still-potent forces of Romanticism on equal terms a poet needed to be a revolutionary. What was accomplished by two more rebellious contemporaries—one a self-appointed firebrand, the other a quiet, stubborn Yankee individualist, --will be seen in the chapter which follows.
By 1890 British poetry was experiencing a revolt from the worst excesses of Romantic diction. Bridges and Hopkins had already initiated the search for a fresh idiom. Before the decade ended, Kipling, Housman, and Hardy had begun to forge a new poetic language, rooted in plain speech and free of literary affectation: a language which at least partially replaced the loose overstatement of emotionalism with the dry understatement of irony.

In America, too, changes were perceptible, but they moved more slowly and erratically. Emily Dickinson, during her years of seclusion, had carefully shaped a spare, terse idiom that denied access to the poetic diction of late Romanticism; and in the early nineties some of her work (polished, to be sure, by the genteel Higginson) was made available to readers. Stephen Crane's poetry, the by-product of a career devoted to fiction, offered some startling new effects in the way of metric, imagery, and terse language. Trumbull Stickney and George Santayana had made tentative efforts to write in a language less trite, diffuse and emotional. But these experiments
failed to establish any large movement toward the reformation of poetic language. The time was not yet ripe; decadent Romanticism, in the form of fin-de-siècle exoticism and the genteel tradition, was too strong.

Two American poets, one beginning in the middle nineties and the other a decade later, were to dedicate themselves to the reformation of poetry and in so doing become the pioneers of a new poetic era. Others would join A. A. Robinson and Ezra Pound, but not until after each had, in his separate fashion, opened the way. Robinson's effort to create a new kind of poetry came entirely through the example of his own careful work; Pound would become increasingly a maker of precepts as well as a setter of examples. And although both succeeded in producing poetry radically different from that of their turn-of-the-century contemporaries, neither began by making a sharp break with tradition: they were simply more persistent and more courageous than their associates in searching for a medium fit to express the realities of their time.

Robinson, continuing to use (though with very great skill) the available nineteenth-century metric, learned the value of plain, idiomatic language mainly through realistic fiction: Flaubert, Daudet, and Coppée in French; Hardy and Kipling in English. From Hawthorne and James he seems to have gained more respect for craftsmanship than he could readily find in Romantic poetry. A consti-
tutional aversion to sentimentality and an ironic view of life gave his poetic language the mordancy that had been lacking in the plain style of Wordsworth, of Browning, and of the dialect poets.

Pound first approached the language dilemma of his age by the familiar route of Spenser, Coleridge, and Rossetti: deliberate exploration of the archaic. Though he was not so deeply concerned as Robinson with creating a plain style (indeed he found Pre-Raphaelite ornateness much to his taste), Pound no less than the New England poet was an enemy of Romantic emotionalism and vagueness. In Provençal poetry he found intricate verse forms that required the utmost technical precision. In Dante and Cavalcanti he found a superior use of concretion, the functional metaphor. Through his various researches into world literature he found exciting and colorful new subjects that enriched his poetic vocabulary. His later studies of Chinese and late Latin poetry, however, along with his interest in Imagism, were to strip much of the opulence from Pound's language. Despite the marked dissimilarity in their work, both Robinson and Pound had in common an intense preoccupation with artistry—meticulous, painstaking habits of composition that were born of a deep respect for language.

The years 1900 to 1910 were for Edwin Arlington Robinson his second decade as a poet, a decade only a little
less difficult and obscure than the first. During this period he left the lonely isolation of his native Gardiner, Maine, to take up permanent residence in New York, where he discovered a new kind of isolation. He gained and lost the patronage of a President of the United States; he joined his literary generation in a fruitless attempt to write drama; and he produced two volumes of poetry. Meanwhile, despite favorable reviews of his books, he was unable to sell a line to the magazines—a gallling failure to one who had hoped to earn a living, however meagre, by his pen.

It would be a little inaccurate to call this period one in which Robinson attained poetic majority, since his first volume had displayed a maturity remarkable for a man of only twenty-six. Generally speaking, both Robinson's style and his attitudes had been formed by the time of his first public appearance; he did not, like so many poets, carry on his education in public. Yet these two volumes—Captain Craig (1902) and The Town Down the River (1910)—show clearly the direction his later work would take: the long, ruminative verse novels and an abstract, syllogistic poetry of ideas. Likewise there is a clear progression in his language to an even plainer idiom than in the earlier work, as well as an almost total absence of the "purple patch" style that had occasionally crept into his first two volumes.
What theories of poetic language did Robinson hold?

One good answer might be that the poetry itself demonstrates his beliefs better than any explicit commentary ever could. But one need not be satisfied with such a cryptic statement. Robinson wrote almost no prose; he found it eminently "not my natural form of expression"; but his comments in letters, interviews, and the one sizeable literary essay he ever published show unmistakably that his plain style was the result of firm convictions. Perhaps his most significant remark on this subject is one from the essay mentioned above, which recalled that during his apprenticeship,

Time had no special significance for a certain juvenile and incorrigible fisher of words, who thought nothing of fishing two weeks to catch a stanza, or even a line, that he would not throw back into a squirming sea of language where there was every word but the one he wanted. There were strange and iridescent and impossible words that would seize the bait and swallow the hook and all but drag the excited angler in after them, but like that famous catch of Hiawatha's, they were generally not the fish he wanted. He wanted fish that were smooth and shining and subtle, and very much alive, and not too strange; and presently, after long patience and many rejections, they began to bite.

Upon the appearance of his first book, *The Torrent and the Night Before*, Robinson remarked wryly to his friend Arthur Gledhill:

There is very little tinkling water, and there is not a red-bellied robin in the whole collection. When it comes to "nightingales and roses" I am not "in it" nor have I the
smallest desire to be. I sing, in my own peculiar manner, of heaven & hell and now and then of natural things (supposing they exist) of a more prosy connotation than those generally admitted into the domain of metre. In short I write whatever I think is appropriate to the subject and let tradition go to the deuce. 6

The poetry itself confirmed this belief that a blunt, even prosy, language was to be the salvation of poetry, along with a corollary conviction that poets who trod the well-worn path of Romanticism richly deserved banishment:

To get at the eternal strength of things,
And fearlessly to make strong songs of it
Is, in my mind, the mission of that man
The world would call a poet. He may sing
But roughly and withal ungraciously;
But if he touch to life the one right chord
Wherein God's music slumbers, and awake
To truth one drowsed ambition, he sings well.

("Octaves--I," Children of the Night, p. 91) 7

Oh for a poet—for a beacon bright
To rift this changeless glimmer of dead gray;
To spirit back the Muses, long astray,
And flush Parnassus with a newer light;
And put these little sonnet-men to flight
Who fashion, in a shrewd mechanic way,
Songs without souls, that flicker for a day,
To vanish in irrevocable night.

("Sonnet," ibid., p. 63)

In a letter to Josephine Preston Peabody he observed: "I have come to learn that vagueness is literary damnation (nothing less); and I have determined that whatever I do in the future—excepting now and then an excursion into symbolism—will be tolerably intelligible." 8
Robinson's critical observations to and about his contemporaries are also significant. Santayana's work seemed to him "like something written by a highly sophisticated corpse." He advised Louis Ledoux not to "spend a great deal of time worrying about the criticism of any man, whatever his personal attractions may be, who is satisfied with [George Edward Woodberry's] 'Comrades'." To Miss Peabody went a recommendation to avoid "all high-falutin' diction and more or less nebulous generalizing." Moody, Robinson's friendly rival in this decade, came in for much attention. The "Ode in Time of Hesitation" drew Robinson's qualified admiration; but his classic restraint balked at the pomposity of "by God's ring-finger stirred" (line 11, part VI), which he told Daniel Gregory Mason was "with all respect to genius, really damnable." To Moody himself Robinson had said of the Ode, "I cannot help thinking that you are still given to... an occasional affectation of the vocabulary." He found "The Menagerie" to be "confoundedly clever," and he admired the mawkish but un rhetorical "The Daguerreotype." A series of letters from Robinson to Moody in 1900 and 1901 reveal his attempts to steer Moody's language away from the ornate and rhetorical;

I beseech you to agree with me in showering all sorts of damnation on your occasional, inconsistent and obnoxious use of archaic monstrousities like "liftheth," "doth," etc. I may be narrow and unreasonable on this point, but I am pretty confident that in ten years this
sort of thing will not be tolerated. If you made any possible gain either in melody or in strength...I should not be given to kick, --but it seems to me that you do nothing of the kind.15

Yet in many respects Robinson was a literary conservative. He emphatically did not share the twentieth century's enthusiasm for Donne;16 he found the prose of Gautier and Maupassant shockingly immoral,17 the Yellow Book "an elegantly got up fake" with "no excuse for being that I can see."18 His only recorded comment on Yeats concerned a portrait in the Outlook: "I am too conservative to admire the taste that leads a man to make such a 'holy show' of himself."19 He was to become one of the country's most outspoken critics of free verse and Imagism; Nancy Evans, interviewing Robinson for the Bookman in 1932, evoked this response on the subject:

"Poetry must be music," he said, "not that it must jingle, but it must be music. And that is the defect of free verse. Maybe it's possible to write musical free verse, but I've never read any. And it's not memorable, either."20

That he paid tribute to the Romantic theory of inspiration is clear from such notations as "an artist is just a sort of living whistle through which Something blows"21 and "No one who writes poetry can tell why he wrote it."22 On the other hand, numerous references to his painstaking composition habits show that his inspirationalism was not firmly
intrenched, like Stedman's or Woodberry's.\textsuperscript{23}

Direct poetic influences on Robinson are difficult to assess. He was so much his own man that any thought of discipleship to another poet is out of the question. Also, as I have already noted, the most engrossing literature of his formative years seems to have been fiction. His letters show, however, that he had a very sure grasp of nineteenth and late eighteenth-century poetry. Kipling is mentioned most often and most favorably; others he admired were Cowper, Crabbe, Wordsworth, Tennyson, Arnold, Browning, and Housman.\textsuperscript{24} The important fact here is that he usually restricted his observations to specific poems and passages, a characteristic trait of the literary craftsman. In other words, he was able to take from any poet what seemed valuable and discard the rest.

Though he wrote poetry almost constantly until his death in 1935 and lived through several major and minor prosodical revolutions, Robinson never ventured far beyond the well-defined boundaries of nineteenth-century metric. \textit{Captain Craig} and \textit{The Town Down the River} contain most of the forms used by his contemporaries: the Italian sonnet, blank verse, the tetrameter quatrain, the ballad stanza, classical hexameter and other galloping euphonist meters. And in his earlier volumes had appeared ballades, villanelles, and rondeaux. The anapests of "Twilight Song" (which the poet called "rather swagger") show the influence
of Kipling, as well as his metrical affinity with Woodberry, Lodge, and Moody:

Through the shine, through the rain  
We have shared the day's load;  
To the old march again  
We have tramped the long road;  
We have laughed, we have cried,  
And we've tossed the King's crown;  
We have fought, we have died,  
And we've trod the day down.

(Captain Craig, p. 169)

Within the limits of traditional metric, however, Robinson was an experimentalist of considerable imagination. Much of the success of "Miniver Cheevy" is owing to the poet's metrical skill: he has invigorated the hackneyed tetrameter quatrain by lopping a foot from the last line to give a ludicrous and appropriate effect of anti-climax to each stanza; to strengthen this light-verse effect, the second rhyme in every stanza is feminine:

Miniver loved the Medici,  
Albeit he had never seen one;  
He would have sinned incessantly  
Could he have been one.

(Town Down the River, p. 98)

His virtuosity shows itself well in "The Town Down the River." Evidently recalling his early apprenticeship in the complex French forms, Robinson made every use of refrain, subtly shifting rhyme patterns, and linking rhymes. Another successful test of the poet's skill is in the delicate trochees of "Momus":

25
"Who reads Byron any more?"—
Shut the door,
Momus, for I feel a draught;
Shut it quick, for some one laughed.—
"What's become of
Browning? Some of
Wordsworth lumbers like a raft?

(Town Down the River, pp. 64-65)

A most notable feature of Robinson's metric is his adaptation of standard forms to his own rather remarkable uses. Best known of these is doubtless his use of the sonnet for character portrayal, as in "Aaron Stark," "Reuben Bright," and "Shadrach O'Leary." Another equally exacting practice is that of channeling narrative into such tightly-knit lyric forms as that of "The Whip." The meter is trimeter, the complex rhyme pattern that of the Spenserian stanza with the final line removed:

There were some ropes of sand
Recorded long ago,
But none, I understand,
Of water. Is it so?
And she--she struck the blow,
You but a neck behind...
You saw the river flow--
Still, shall I call you blind?

(Town Down the River, p. 70)

Since blank verse was to play so important a part in Robinson's later work, some mention of its use in these two volumes might be fitting. His first two books contained very little blank verse—a short poem to Whitman in the first and a series of "Octaves" in the second. "Captain
Craig was Robinson's first attempt to use blank verse for dramatic narrative, and in the same volume he followed it with three other long blank-verse poems: "Isaac and Archibald," "Aunt Imogen," and "The Book of Annandale." But for some reason—possibly the reviews of men like the poetaster Frank Dempster Sherman, who found the poetic line "rough, crude, and altogether prosaic"—Robinson published none in The Town Down the River. "Ben Jonson Entertains a Man from Stratford" is the only blank verse poem in The Man Against the Sky (1916).

Many believe Robinson's early blank verse to be his best; and certainly it must be conceded that little of the garrulity which was to mar his later verse novels can be found in "Captain Craig," "Isaac and Archibald," and "Aunt Imogen." While metrically regular, the form is not monotonous; and its natural, idiomatic turn of phrase gives a deceptive air of the casual. Here is the opening passage of "Captain Craig":

I doubt if ten men in all Tilbury Town
Had ever shaken hands with Captain Craig,
Or called him by his name, or looked at him
So curiously, or so concernedly,
As they had looked at ashes; but a few—
Say five or six of us—had found somewhere
The spark in him, and we had fanned it there,
Choked under, like a jest in Holy Writ,
By Tilbury prudence.

(Captain Craig, p. 1)
In view of all that has been said about Robinson's plain language, it will come as something of a surprise to find that in many external respects his vocabulary resembles that of a conservative like Santayana. All told, the vocabulary of emotion is large: words like adoration, shame, courage, glory, joy, rapture, passion, exaltation, laughter, tears, anguish, affright, grief, pain, fear, despair; forlorn, sweet, sad, sullen, thrilled, annoyed, detested, crazy, passionate, pitiless, glad, vehement, superb, wondrous, sublime; detest, loathe, hate, malign, appal, weep, quiver; and such coinages as soul-clutch and fiery-frantic. Two qualifications, however, are necessary here. One is that the emotionalist language in any single poem is rarely excessive: the words do not appear in clumps and frequently are placed in an ironic context. Of even more significance is this fact about Robinson: the emotions are never his own; they are at least once removed, belonging in all cases to personalities in the poem. This practice of objectifying emotions, while by no means foreign to Romantic poetry, was not its habitual manner; and in the twentieth century it was one means by which poets could break the curse of emotionalism. Hence the quantity of emotionalist vocabulary in Robinson can be misleading.

When Robinson spoke of vagueness as "literary damnation" he was stating not a hopeful promise but a lesson well learned. Consequently his lexicon of indefinite
words is, except in one poem, rather small and of a special nature. One finds mystery, mystic, dim, unrevealed, unseen, shapeless, faint, obscurity, and the Unknown; but more characteristic are the indefinites of daily discourse: some, something, somehow, somewhere, somewhat, thing, more or less, sort of, here and there. Since they are so common a part of everyday speech, these indefinites add as much to naturalness as they detract from clarity. The single exception to Robinson’s rare use of indefinites is that puzzling poem, "The Book of Annandale," where he tried without success to fuse mysticism and realism. Vaguely, incomplete, meaningless, unanswered, speechless, indistinguishable, unintelligible, unspeakably, unsubstantial, elusively, mutely, strangeness, and blurred are representative of his confusion.

The powerful grip of Romantic diction can nowhere be gauged more accurately than in the work of Robinson, that devotee of plain language. We find the familiar vocabulary: abyss, incubus, pageantry, asphodels, foam-born child of innocence, passion’s thrall, alembic, galleons, deeps, quest, dryad, ancienity, rue, siren song, murmur; faery, clinquant, scrolled, antic, accursed, wondrous; toil, wreak, glimmer, fling, make bold, parley, delve, abide, come to pass. Along with it are the archaisms frightened, fond (i.e., foolish), perforce, smite, sore beguiled, anon, o’ nights, albeit, howbeit, thereat, accurst, benedight.
"The Book of Annandale" is especially heavy in poeticisms; a few are vampire thoughts, bodeful, foredrowsed, primeval, augur, anodyne, poppied, radiance, incubus, aught, orisons, murmuring, love-light, wizardry, bourgeois

Robinson could not altogether escape this language, but he could turn it to his advantage—and did. One means of compensating for its triteness was objectification: letting someone else utter the words. Here, for instance, the clergyman Vanderberg is speaking of his dead mistress:

"And I shall have it all from her,
The foam-born child of innocence.
I feel you smiling while I speak,
But that's of little consequence;

("Sainte-Nitouche," Captain Craig, p. 153)

Another expedient was to create tension by juxtaposing poetic diction with plain, direct language:

He knocked, and I beheld him at the door—
A vision for the gods to verify.
"What battered ancientry is this," thought I,
"And when, if ever, did we meet before?"
But ask him as I might, I got no more
For answer than a moaning and a cry:
Too late to parley, but in time to die,
He staggered, and lay shapeless on the floor.

("Alma Mater," Town Down the River, p. 95)

The impact of the last two lines owes much to their contrast with the rather ornate language of the first six. But throughout the passage this process of contrast is at work: battered and ancientry, knocked and beheld, parley
and die all create semantic tensions. But his best-known device of this kind is the deliberate placing of poetic words or images in prosaic surroundings for purposes of irony, as in this passage from "Captain Craig":

But I soon yawned out of that and set myself
To face again the loud monotonous ride
That lay before me like a vista drawn
Of bag-racks to the fabled end of things.

(Captain Craig, p. 12)

To modern critics Robinson's greatest weakness in vocabulary is the overwhelming number of abstract, learned, and latinate terms his poetry contains. Here is a selection: metamorphosis, gratitude, titillation, complacency, composite, immunity, apparatus, malediction, iniquity, profusion, indolence, perigee, valediction, discrepancies, retribution, vigilance, reproof, consequence, platitudes, ravishment; in-veterate, unmolested, oxidized, accoutred, decrepit, unobtrusive, unobscured, disconsolate, reactionary, accredited, invincible, compassionate, definitive, insidious, unrevealed, perennial, patronizing, specious, superannuated; jeopardize, comprehend, assail, implore, retrieve.

Historically speaking, this vocabulary is allied to the didactic element in American Romanticism. Considered from a personal standpoint, it reflects both Robinson's bookishness and his deliberate intention, in a time of literary opulence, sentiment, and prettiness, to write a
poetry of precisely-expressed ideas. The contrast between two successive stanzas in "Clavering" will indicate that his aureate vocabulary could defeat its purpose by losing or abandoning the poem's concretion:

I think of him as I should think
Of one who for scant wages played,
And faintly, a flawed instrument
That fell while it was being made;

I think of him as one who fared,
Unfaltering and undeceived,
Amid mirages of renown
And urgings of the unachieved;

*(Town Down the River, p. 51)*

And without the discipline of rhyme and stanza, abstract ideas in his blank verse often destroy the very poetry they were meant to support. While this fault is common in Robinson's late work, it is also apparent in such an early narrative as "Captain Craig":

But even as we draft omnipotence
Itself to our own image, we pervert
The courage of an infinite ideal
To finite resignation.

*(Captain Craig, p. 8)*

But when the learned abstractions are juxtaposed with plain language or set in an ironic context, their weakness is turned to strength:

The specious weight of loud reproof
Sinks where a still conviction floats;
And on God's ocean after storm
Time's wreckage is half pilot-boats;
Robinson's skill at this kind of contrast shows to best advantage in "The Revealer," his tribute to Theodore Roosevelt. Casting the strenuous man as Samson and placing him appropriately among lions (see Judges, XIV), Robinson deftly avoided both the didactic and the sentimental—those pitfalls of occasional verse—by just such an ironic juxtaposition of words:

Equipped with unobscured intent
He smiles with lions at the gate,
Acknowledging the compliment
Like one familiar with his fate;
The lions, having time to wait,
Perceive a small cloud in the skies,
Whereon they look, disconsolate,
With scared, reactionary eyes.

(Town Down the River, p. 126)

Also an antidote to his heavily latinized vocabulary was Robinson's masterful use of monosyllables. Probably no American has forced so much music out of common little words, or crammed so much substance in tiny packages:

You left the two to find
Their own way to the brink
Then—shall I call you blind—?
You chose to plunge and sink.
God knows the gall we drink
Is not the mead we cry for,
Nor was it, I should think—
For you—a thing to die for.

("The Whip," Town Down the River, p. 69)
This observation, by Edwin Fussell, may help to account for Robinson's lexical skill:

Robinson's vocabulary gives one the impression of being the largest ever used in American poetry up to his time...and this was of considerable significance in the subsequent development of modern poetry. It is one superficial reason why modern poetry is difficult, and it also explains one reason why there has been such an advance in the emotional range of recent poetry. Precise emotion can be achieved only if you "cross the meanings" of the words, but a broad range of precise feeling can be represented only if there is a large number of words.27

Much of the poetry, as one would expect, has a syntax that supports an idiomatic vocabulary. Here the absence of inversion, periodic structure, ellipsis, and such allied rhetorical devices as question, outcry, and exclamation is nearly total. Two kinds of syntax can be distinguished here. One may be called "plain style": it derives from realistic fiction and is characterized by sentences of short to moderate length, with normal prose word order and predominantly coordinate structure. It is the narrator's idiom, the calm and objective "mask" of the poet:

She knew the truth, but not yet all of it:
He loved her, but he would not let his eyes
Prove that he loved her; and he would not hold
His wife there in his arms.

So, like a slave, she waited at his knees,
And waited. She was not unhappy now.
She quivered, but she knew that he would speak
Again--and he did speak.
("As a World Would Have It," Captain Craig, p. 161)

The other, Robinson's colloquial style, more closely follows the cadences of spoken language. While normal word order and coordinate structure still prevail, the sentences are generally shorter; there are frequent parenthetical interruptions and discursive repetitions, as well as the usual contractions and ellipses of colloquial discourse:

"That's what it is: Isaac is not quite right.
You see it, but you don't know what it means:
The thousand little differences--no,
You do not know them, and it's well you don't;
You'll know them soon enough--God bless you, boy!--
You'll know them, but not all of them--not all.

("Isaac and Archibald," Captain Craig, p. 96)

Naturally the idiom varies with character. The above is spoken by an old, garrulous man, a rural down-Easter. The passage below reveals the irritable (and by this time rather disordered) personality of Napoleon at Saint Helena:

Ho, is it you? I thought you were a ghost.
Is it time for you to poison me again?
Well, here's our friend, the rain,--
Miron ton, miron ton, miron taine... 
Man, I could murder you almost,
You with your pills and toast.
Take it away and eat it, and shoot rats.

("An Island," Town Down the River, pp. 37-38)

But these plain styles did not always fit Robinson's subject or mood. He also used a formal syntax on appropriate occasions—a much more restrained and less oratorical
grand manner than his contemporaries affected, but of the same genre. In his tribute to Lincoln the intention is eloquence:

The face that in our vision feels
Again the venom that we flung,
Transfigured to the world reveals
The vigilance to which we clung.
Shrewd, hallowed, harrassed, and among
The mysteries that are untold,
The face we see was never young
Nor could it wholly have been old.

("The Master," Town Down the River, p. 5)

In Captain Craig's denunciation of modern religion, the same formal style has been transformed to a vehicle of logic:

But as the bitterness that loads your tears
Makes Dead Sea swimming easy, so the gloom,
The penance, and the woeful pride you keep,
Make bitterness your buoyance of the world.
And at the fairest and the frenziedest
Alike of your God-fearing festivals,
You so compound the truth to pamper fear
That in the doubtful surfeit of your faith
You clamor for the food that shadows eat.

(Captain Craig, p. 9)

And in the last stanza of "For a Dead Lady," the formal manner, tinged with irony and rescued from heaviness by the technical expedient of feminine rhyme, serves as a near-perfect instrument for elegy:

The beauty, shattered by the laws
That have creation in their keeping,
No longer tremble at applause,
Or over children that are sleeping;
And we who delve in beauty's lore
Know all that we have known before
Of what inexorable cause
Makes time so vicious in his reaping.

(Town Down the River, p. 115)

The difficult matter of evaluating concretion in Robinson's poetry may be aided by reference to a passage from Ezra Pound's criticism. In poetry, Pound stated, "language is charged or energized in various manners." He went on to distinguish three of these manners:

MELOPOEIA, wherein the words are charged, over and above their plain meaning, with some musical property, which directs the bearing or trend of that meaning.

PHANOPOEIA, which is a casting of images upon the visual imagination.

LOGOPOEIA, 'the dance of the intellect among words', that is to say, it employs words not only for their direct meaning, but it takes count in a special way of habits of usage, of the context we expect to find with the words, its usual concomitants, of its known acceptances, and of ironical play.28

It is the last of these, logopoeia, to which I wish to draw attention; for Robinson's poetry seems to me eminently a "dance of the intellect among words," a poetry where concretion is necessarily subordinate.29

But by logopoeic poetry one does not mean abstract didacticism. The intellect "dances"; it is a poetry of wit. And if wit, according to the classic definition, is a swift perception of likenesses, then logopoeia at its
best is eminently a poetry of metaphor and simile. This, as an explanation of Robinson's work in the concreitive mode, seems to me considerably better than the prevailing view, which arises from a narrow emphasis on the Symbolist-Imagist esthetic (mainly phanopoëia) and is based entirely on the discursive and abstract later poetry:

Robinson's substance is not sensation, but intuition; his method is not metaphorical, but syllogistic; his material is not that of analogy and allegory, but of abstract formulation. Thus his typical poem does not strike out for concrete substance in external reality; it drives toward the center of moral consciousness for its certainty, even when the process involves an exploration that leaves sensory logic and the external world behind for the sphere of pure notion.30

Thus concretion in Robinson is not Symbolistic nor Imagistic, but metaphorical. What sets it apart from the concreitive mode of a poet like Moody is the fact that it is almost never lush and ornate, never merely decorative. Nor is it Romantically trite, with the conventional "poetic" figures that had served poetry for a century. By using language with accuracy Robinson created precise images, and in avoiding the pitfalls of Romantic diction he created fresh images. Consider the one below, from "Captain Craig."

A little boy, deciding to drown himself, went to the river where he

Waited on the rock above the stream,
Just like a kingfisher.

(Captain Craig, p. 7)
Upon examination, the simile's incongruity resolves itself to a startling accuracy of observation: the ragged, skinny-legged child who stands with bent head staring down into the stream does look like a kingfisher. Another sharply-caught figure describes the Captain's demanding garrulity as "the talons of his talk." In "The Book of Annandale" the poet, without recourse to sentimentality, captures a bereaved husband's grief in three swift images of sound, touch, and sight:

No sound of someone singing any more,
No smoothing of slow fingers on his hair,
No shimmer of pink slippers on brown tiles.

(Captain Craig, p. 133)

And though it was not his chosen manner of expression, Robinson proved in passages like the one below that he could succeed in a poetry of euphonic concretion:

Smoke that floated and rolled in the twilight away from the chimney
Floats and rolls no more. Wheeling and falling, instead,
Down with a twittering flash go the smooth and inscrutable swallows,
Down to the place made theirs by the cold work of the sea.

("Pasa Thalassa Thalassa," Town Down the River, p. 60)

That he frequently used concretion for symbolic (not Symbolist) purposes is evidenced by the red-bound book of Annandale, the Aristophanic frogs in the Carmichael sonnet from Captain Craig, the chess game in "Atherton's Gambit,"
and more generally in poems like "The Pilot," "The Whip," "The Klondike," and "The Sunken Crown." He was also capable of sustaining and developing a powerful realistic imagery:

To think of men on stretchers and on beds,  
Or on foul floors, like starved outrageous lizards,  
Made human with paralysis and rags;  
Or of some poor devil on a battle-field,  
Left undiscovered and without the strength  
To drag a maggot from his clotted mouth;  
Or of women working where a man would fall—Flat-breasted miracles of cheerfulness  
Made neuter by the work that no man counts  
Until it waits undone; children thrown out  
To feed their veins and souls with offal...  
Yes,  
I have had half a mind to blow my brains out  
Sometimes;  

(Captain Craig, pp. 21-22)

Some of his most effective images are those which result from ironic contrasts—between the poetic and the prosaic, the abstract and the concrete, the pleasant and the sombre. Of the first, this well-known stanza is a prime example:

Miniver cursed the commonplace  
And eyed a khaki suit with loathing;  
He missed the medieval grace  
Of iron clothing.

("Miniver Cheevey," Town Down the River, p. 98)

The second occurs constantly in Robinson's work; here is one instance:

"I leave you in all gentleness  
To science and a ripe success.  
Now God be with you, brother Oakes,  
With you and with your artichokes:"
You have the vision, more or less."

("Two Gardens in Linndale," *Town Down the River*, p. 118)

The last kind of contrast, also fairly common in Robinson, is nowhere better done than in "Leonora." The lilting meter, the almost sentimental tenderness, and the touches of Pre-Raphaelite imagery all conceal the poem's grim truth--which is not merely that Leonora is dead, but that death has considerately rescued her from whatever drab or horrible future she had been destined for. Here the poet has vitalized a banal Victorian sentiment ("a fate worse than death") by this ironic contrast of the pretty and the grim:

They have made for Leonora this low dwelling in the ground,
And with cedar they have woven the four walls round.
Like a little dryad hiding she'll be wrapped all in green,
Better kept and longer valued than by ways that would have been.

They will come with many roses in the early afternoon,
They will come with pinks and lilies and with Leonora soon;
And as long as beauty's garments over beauty's limbs are thrown,
There'll be lilies that are liars, and the rose will have its own.

There will be a wondrous quiet in the house that they have made,
And to-night will be a darkness in the place where she'll be laid;
But the builders, looking forward into time, could only see
darker nights for Leonora than to-night shall ever be.

(*Town Down the River*, pp. 76-77)
Vachel Lindsay's characteristically exaggerated comment on Robinson's language may serve as a text for whatever remains to be said about his exploration of the idiomatic mode:

We...have ordained and established two languages, the United States language, and the American language,...the one for informal, the other for formal occasions, one inherited from the Mermaid Tavern, the other from the Globe Theater.31

Robinson, Lindsay went on to say, wrote in "American," while the real poets (i.e., himself, Masters, and Sandburg) wrote in "United States." I have--with less distortion, I hope--touched on the same matter in my discussion of Robinson's "plain style" and his "colloquial style." Robinson's typical expression is not that of the man in the street but, like the medium that Wordsworth sought (and rarely found), a plain language based on the spoken voice, but "purified from...its real defects, from all lasting and rational causes of dislike or disgust."32

Robinson's austere esthetic could not absorb Whitman's belief that the racy argot of the streets was superlative material for poetry. Thus to Lindsay, that devoted Whitmanite, Robinson's language seemed formal. But there can be no doubt, I think, that Robinson's poetry did much to further a natural idiomatic style in American poetry, even though the more flamboyant tactics of Lindsay and his friends during the next decade would receive greater credit
for ridding American poetry of its rhetorical affectations.

2.

By the mere mention of Ezra Pound's name we are transported into our own literary age. The major work of this poet is so "modern," so strikingly different from the poetry we have so far examined, that only an accident of time, it would seem, has placed him in the "twilight interval" at all. In this section I hope to show that Pound's early poetry has closer relations with the immediate past and with the work of his contemporaries than is ordinarily thought. An examination of Pound's early poems will show, also, that his literary career has developed consistently from its origins in nineteenth-century poetry and that he is thus, in the best sense of the word, a traditional poet.

First a number of clarifications must be made. One is chronological: Pound, the youngest by eleven years of all the poets in this study, is the only one whose career did not begin in the 'nineties or earlier; hence he is the only poet of our group whose juvenilia is the focus of attention. Another closely related fact is that Pound is a poet of "stages"—i.e., his work shows, from one interval of time to another, fairly marked stylistic differences that are owing to new influences and new interests. In short, Pound, unlike Robinson, carried on his literary
education in public; and we must limit our attention here to the "grammar school" stage, with only a few necessary glimpses into the later work. A final limitation concerns the riches of material, both primary and secondary, which embarrass any student of Pound. His own canon is voluminous; the books and articles about him are even greater in number, with an almost endless variety of themes, approaches, and emphases. In order to avoid numerous fascinating but tangential issues, I shall attempt to be rigidly selective in the use of this material, citing only that which is pertinent to the immediate subject—Pound's early poetic language.

The well-known biographical facts may be reviewed swiftly: graduation from Hamilton College in 1905; M.A. in Romance languages at Pennsylvania (where his Philadelphia friends included William Carlos Williams, B.D., and Marianne Moore) in 1906; a brief, unhappy interval at Wabash College; departure for Europe to research a doctoral dissertation (soon abandoned) on Lope de Vega; publication in 1908 of A Lume Spento in Venice; the beginning of thirteen years' residence in London which started with the publication of Personæ and Exultations in 1909, and the association with T. E. Hulme, F. S. Flint, and Richard Aldington that would result in the Imagist movement. What these bare facts fail to reveal are Pound's enthusiastic, precocious scholarship in Romance literature,
his already well-developed esthetic, his endless curiosity and energy concerning all things artistic, and above all, his fierce devotion to the art of poetry.

That Pound began his career as "a belated member of the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood" I am not quite willing to accept in a strict sense; but that his origins are in part Victorian seems obvious. The luxurious cadences and musical diction of Swinburne are evident in A Lume Spento and after; two poems in Personae, as well as the title itself (from Dramatis Personae) reveal Pound's admiration for Browning; several early poems show the influence of Yeats' "Celtic twilight" poetry; and his preface to the Cavalcanti volume acknowledges that "In the matter of these translations and of my knowledge of Tuscan poetry, Rossetti is my father and my mother." Scattered through the critical essays are numerous acknowledgements of the influence these poets had on Pound. In one respect, then, he was an heir of the nineteenth-century Romantic tradition; that tradition, as I shall demonstrate, is clearly evident in his poetic language.

This is, however, only a part of the story. By about 1906 the most intellectually curious poet of our century had already begun new explorations. Most significant of these was the Middle Ages—not of England (although traces of Chaucerian vocabulary appear in his early poems), but
of Provence, Italy, and France: specifically, the Troubadours, Cavalcanti and Dante, and "Montcorbier, alias Villon." From Provence and Tuscany Pound imported a new set of metrical forms to replace those the euphonists had worn out. From Dante and Cavalcanti he was learning facts about the functional, non-ornamental metaphor and the precise expression of emotions. In the "intimate, unvarnished speech" of Villon and Browning he was finding a means to overcome Romantic bombast. His later studies in Homer and the Greek Anthology, late Latin poetry, the Chinese ideogram, Anglo-Saxon, and French Symbolism would help to develop not only his own poetic idiom but that of an entire literary age.

Pound published little poetic theory before 1912, but his attitudes toward the language of poetry have been, on the whole, consistent enough during his career that the criticism written between 1912 and 1915 will indicate the direction his language had been taking before that time. The Imagist manifesto of 1912 stated, among other things, the following intentions and instructions:

To use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.

As regarding rhythm, to compose in the sequence of the musical phrase, not in sequence of a metronome.

Use no superfluous word, no adjective which does not reveal something.
Don't use such an expression as 'dim lands of peace'. It dulls the image. It mixes an abstraction with the concrete. It comes from the writer's not realizing that the natural object is always the adequate symbol.

Go in fear of abstractions. Do not retell in mediocre verse what has already been done in prose.38

Even more explicit was a letter to Harriet Monroe three years later:

Poetry must be as well written as prose. Its language must be a fine language departing in no way from speech save by a heightened intensity (i.e., simplicity). There must be no book words, no periphrases, no inversions....

There must be no interjections. No words flying off to nothing....

There must be no clichés, set phrases, stereotyped journalesse. The only escape from such is by precision, a result of concentrated attention to what is writing....

Objectivity and again objectivity, and expression: no hindsight-bbeforeness, no straddled adjectives (as "addled mosses dank"), no Tennysonianness of speech; nothing—nothing that you couldn't, in some circumstance, in the stress of some emotion, actually say. Every literaryism, every book word, fritters away a scrap of the reader's patience, a scrap of his sense of your sincerity. When one really feels and thinks, one stammers with simple speech; it is only in the flurry, the shallow frothy excitement of writing, or the inebriety of metre, that one falls into the easy—oh, how easy—speech of books and poems that one has read...

"Epithets" are usually abstractions—I mean what they call epithets in the books about poetry. The only adjective that is worth using is the adjective that is essential to the sense of the passage, not the decorative frill adjective.39
Notice here that while the combination of beliefs is new, some of them taken singly have analogues in Romanticism: for example, Wordsworth's dislike of bookish diction, his (and De Quincey's) belief that strong emotion produces simple speech. But Pound's emphasis on language, his tendency to see most if not all of poetry's problems as linguistic, is new. And whether or not Pound is largely responsible for the twentieth century's keen interest in poetic language, his position is at least representative of modern critical thought.

His own use of words before 1912, however, had not yet reached a stage which encouraged stark directness. He was at that time making a thorough exploration of archaisms and undergoing a strenuous apprenticeship in the most intricate and artificial poetic forms he could find. For both of these experiments, it might be mentioned, Pound had formidable precedents in the English tradition. Wyatt, Spenser, Coleridge, Rossetti, and Swinburne had all exploited archaisms in an effort to resuscitate the language of poetry; the same poets (Coleridge possibly excepted) had experimented widely in foreign verse forms.

The metric of Pound's early work can be separated into three types: traditional English forms (blank verse, decasyllabic couplets, the ballad, the tetrameter quatrain, the sonnet); medieval European forms (the canzon,
the ballata, the alba, the planh, the villonaud, and the sestina); and his own variations and fusions of these forms. His experiments in form soon established Pound as the most skilled and daring metrist of his period. Maurice Lesemann's remark that Pound's poetry was "the most inspiring book of technique ever written" would be echoed many times by the prominent poet-critics of our age.

Swinburne's poetry attracted Pound because he seemed to the younger man the only Englishman of his day who cared for poetry qua art. The technical influence of Swinburne is evident, for example, in Pound's ballads, where the native English meter has been invigorated with trisyllabic feet:

I have played with God for a woman,
I have staked with my God for truth,
I have lost to my God as a man, clear eyed,
    His dice be not of ruth.

("Ballad for Gloom," Personae, p. 32)

They'll no' get him a' in a book, I think
Though they write it cunningly;
No mouse of the scrolls was the Goodly Fere
But aye loved the open sea.

("Ballad of the Goodly Fere," Exultations, p. 20)

Also in the "Ballad for Gloom" are some of Pound's own contributions to the form: two six-line stanzas and an introductory unrhymed couplet. Another link with the English tradition is Pound's early work with the sonnet. The sestet below, with its parallelism and its regular meter, is a typical euphonist performance:
Old singers half-forgetful of their tunes,
Old painters colour-blind come back once more,
Old poets skillless in the wind-heart runes,
Old wizards lacking in their wonder-lore:

All they that with strange sadness in their eyes
Ponder in silence o'er earth's queynt devise?

(“Masks,” Personae, p. 31)

Likewise his blank verse is, though competent, quite traditional in its regularity. Only the shifting caesura gives this passage any relief from monotony:

Behold! the world of forms is swept beneath—
Turmoil grown visible beneath our peace,
And we that are grown formless rise above,
Fluids intangible that have been men,
We seem as statues round whose high risen base
Some overflowing river is run mad;
In us alone the element of calm!

(“Paracelsus in Excelsis,” Provençal, p. 47)

The Provençal forms were for Pound much more rewarding. Syllabic measures released him from the tyranny of English meter (especially iambic); the subtle rhythms and intricate rhyme patterns opened new vistas for both poetic structure and verbal music; and in general the complex diversity of forms offered to an apprentice poet a challenge not to be found in prevailing English metric. Pound's closest imitations occur in the poems called "Canzoniere" in his first American edition (Provençal). The canzon, based on a seven line stanza, was capable of great variation in rhyme, though it normally employed the same rhyme words from stanza to stanza. "The Yearly Slain" uses Arnaut Daniel's
inter-stanzaic rhyme: corresponding lines in each stanza are rhymed, though there is no rhyme within any single stanza. "The Spear" makes even greater demands on language, with its additional two sets of inside rhyme and its refrain-like repetition of "waters" in the second and fourth lines of each stanza:

Although the clouded storm dismay
Many a heart upon these waters,
The thought of that far golden blaze
Giveth me heart upon the waters,
Thinking thereof my bark is led
To port wherein no storm I dread;
No tempest maketh me afraid.

(Provence, p. 68)

And "To Be Sung Beneath a Window" has both inter-stanzaic rhyme and a complete pattern within the stanza:

Man's love follows many faces,
My love only one face knoweth;
Towards thee only my love floweth,
And outstrips the swift stream's paces.
Were this love well here displayed,
As love flameth 'neath thin jade
Love should glow through these my phrases.

(Provence, p. 70)

These three rhyme sequences are sustained for twenty-eight lines, which means that the "faces" rhyme recurs twelve times, the "knoweth" and "displayed" rhymes eight times each. Such complexity makes heavy demands upon a writer's freedom of expression, but it is invaluable discipline. And indeed such poetry can be justified only because it is the prentice work of a major poet, an early but significant
stage of development; certainly as poetry it is not very good.

From the canson it was but a step to the sestina, a form which Pound brought to life in his famous "Altaforte":

Damn it all! all this our South stinks peace.
You whoreson dog, Papiols, come! Let's to music!
I have no life save when the swords clash.
But ah! when I see the standards, gold, vair, purple, opposing
And the broad fields beneath them turn crimson,
Then howl I my heart nigh mad with rejoicing.

(Exultations, p. 14)
The sestina, another of Arnaut Daniel's inventions, is composed of six six-line stanzas and a concluding half-stanza, or tornada. Here there is no rhyme at all, in the ordinary sense: the same end words (peace, music, clash, etc.) are repeated in each stanza, with an intricate shift of position each time. The tornada typically (though not in "Altaforte") repeats all six end-words, by placing one in the middle and one at the end of each line. In "Altaforte" Pound, forsaking normal syllabic rhythm for a loose accentual one, was able to balance the strictness of the end-word pattern by a freedom of rhythm.

A poet as language-conscious as Pound doubtless realized that the technical dexterity gained from complex forms like the sestina, the ballata, and the canson would be offset in the long run by artificiality of language.

In fitting content to extremely intricate forms, Procrustean
tactics often had to be used. In the **sirventes** of Bertrans de Born and the less rigid **canzone** of Daniel, Pound discovered possibilities for metrical freedom that resulted eventually in *vers libre* and a revolution in modern metric. Both the **sirventes** (a Provençal medium for satire and topical subjects other than love) and the **canzon** had been written for musical accompaniment. Hence they were not always required to follow the regular rhythmic patterns of poetry, if they could better satisfy the rhythm of a musical phrase. The Provençal poets had vastly extended the limits of rhyme through consonance, assonance, alliteration, and identical rhyme, so that rhyming could be as close or as casual as one liked. Moreover, the development of rhyme had gone full circle in Provençal poetry; some of Daniel's **canzone** were without it altogether. One can readily see, then, that when Pound wrote in an open-cadenced, casually rhymed pattern, he had ample precedent in the past:

**Your songs?**

Oh! The little mothers
Will sing them in the twilight,
And when the night
Shrinketh the kiss of the dawn
That loves and kills,
What time the swallow fills
Her note, the little rabbit folk
That some call children
Such as are up and wide
Will laugh your verses to each other,...

("Famam Librosque Cano," *Personae*, pp. 23-24)

He would relax this metric even more in a poem like
"La vraisem," when he attempted to record an old man's incoherent ramblings:

Once there was a woman....
....but I forget....she was....
....I hope she will not come again.

....I do not remember....
I think she hurt me once, but....
That was very long ago.

I do not like to remember things any more.

(Personae, p. 11)

And in "Marvoil" he first demonstrated that remarkable rhythm of falling accents (dactyls and trochees, with an occasional spondee) which would later become the measure of the Cantos. Here we reach a closer approximation of the rhythm of spoken American than any other poetic idiom I can think of:

The Vicomte of Beziers 's not such a bad lot.
I made rimes to his lady this three year:
Vers and canzone, till that damn'd son of Aragon,
Alfonso the half-bald, took to hanging
His helmet at Beziers.

(Personae, p. 51)

Later in his career Pound would admit that during his "vealish years" he had "wallowed in archaisms" and had been at times "obfuscated by the Victorian language." But he has never said anything to indicate that his early experiments in poetic language were mistaken or, indeed, anything more than a necessary stage in his development.
As a euphonist, attracted to the musical effects of language, he found archaic language pleasantly melodic; and as an esthete (in the primary sense of that term) he found the same strange beauty in old words that he had discovered in the "archaic" subject matter of medieval Europe. That he commonly ran to excess in his use of archaisms will surprise nobody who is familiar with Pound's life and works.

In demonstrating Pound's archaic language one hardly knows where to begin, so large is the vocabulary. He used consistently the old second person forms (thee, thou, thine, thy, and ye); some of his other archaic pronouns are mine as a possessive adjective, and everyone. Verbs in third person nearly always take an -eth suffix: crieth, dieth, leaveth, summoneth, saith, floateth, paleth. Other archaic verbs and verb forms are writ, wax, drave, art, brenn, sat, curst, trow, spake, doxt, shouldst, meseems, makyth, and Wright (fashion or make). Among the nouns are fane, jape, versicles, twain, scree, rune, boon, ruth, trencherman, swyven (a Chaucerism), holy-rood, seneschal, dalliance, shoreson, joling, bastard, warder, summoner, avve, fief, and deneane. Some of the even more abundant archaic modifiers are runeing, meet, limning, wyd, sveynt, agone, bourgeoning, wind-molden, full old, are, bight, hardibood, churlish; lief, sith, somewhat, adown, herefrom, suddenly, yestre'en, and the archaic colloquial participles a-hiding, a-jumbling, a-plucking, a-calling, e-murmuring, e-glinting.
An (if), such an one, some synne, no whit, in sooth, and right cunningly add their archaic idiomatic flavor.

The "foreign" quality that Pound's early readers detected in his verse owes as much to the influence of Romance languages on his vocabulary as to his exotic subject matter. These words will illustrate: luth, mere (sea), poignard, moiety, faibleness, ponticella, jongleur, fere (brother), aube,crepuscule, dolour, chevalier, visage, salvacioun, Messire a term of address, seigniory, annunciatrice; pauper as an adjective; disdeign, assoneth. These words are used without italics or quotation marks. Pound's interjections also add to the foreign flavor. While he used the traditional outcries (lo!, nay!, yea!, and alas!), he also employed archaic ones (Holy Odd's bodykins!, Faith, Pardi, God's pity, and Skoal!) and exotic ones (Al-e-o!, Pesto!, Ah-eh!, and Oimè!). More familiar to the reader are such interjections as Bah!, Damn it all!, and Great God!


A natural link between archaisms and poetic diction can be made at this point by looking at the contractions in Pound's poetry. Most of the "poetical" contractions with which we are familiar ('twixt, 'neath, etc.) are
actually archaisms that have survived--mainly, one supposes, for metrical convenience--only in the specialized language of poetry. These conventional forms ('tis, a'en, a'er, o'er, 'twas, no'er) appear in Pound, but many others have also been used to increase the archaic effect: is't, wry'd, 'gainst, 'scape'd, 'tween, 'thout, 'live (alive), mak'th, know'st, ta'en. A special group appear only in "The Ballad of the Goodly Fere" where Pound seems to have been attempting a language both archaic and colloquial: ha' (have), wi' (with), quo' (quoth), no' (not), sin' (since), and a' (all). These last forms are probably all taken from the border ballads. On the other hand, contractions like 'las (elas), 'veils (avails), 'fulgence (effulgence or refulgence), and evan' scant seem to be no more than metrical tricks.

Pound was not ready at this time to reject the fustian of Romanticism; evidently he still admired the Pre-Raphaelite mode too much. In his early poems are nouns like valour, allurement, splendour, minstrel, guerelon[sic], lotus flower, myrtle, immortality, pageantry, dower, sea-marge, the deep, diadem, hamadryads, bourn, chalice, mantles, foray, Phoebus, Aurora, Mammon, tempests, strand (shore), handmaid, pard (leopard); adjectives like quaffing, boary, sybilwise, gallant, wee, kindred, bounden, garlanded, vile, dolorous, void; verbs like slay, beseech, ohide, beset.

In sharp contrast to Robinson, Pound has always been an overtly emotional poet. Moreover, he has never denied
the importance of emotion in poetry but instead has insisted upon a poetry "which corresponds exactly to the emotion or shades of emotion to be expressed." Generally speaking, then, his emotionalist vocabulary is moderately large in size but rather well controlled. Some of its nouns are folly, mercy, rancour, sorrow, wailing, bitterness, grief, love, soul, loveliness, heart, joy, caress, shame, passion, glory, bosoms, hope, tremor, rapture; some adjectives are gay, glad, sweet, sweeter, sighing, scorning, bitter, dear, crying, tremulous, and valiant. The most frequently used emotional words are those of romantic love. Like Robinson, Pound often detached himself from personal responsibility for the emotion; but his method was different from that of Robinson's detached narrator. Pound's device--one that he has continued to use--is the persona or "mask": the dramatic monologue or soliloquy derived mainly from Browning. Not always was the emotion thus detached, however. A poem like "Camaraderie" is quite as overtly (and tritely) sentimental as anything by Woodberry or Sterling:

Sometimes I feel thy cheek against my face  
Close-pressing, soft as is the South's first breath  
That all the subtle earth-things summoneth  
To spring in wood-land and in meadow space.

(Personae, p. 30)

A vocabulary of indefinite words is, even early in Pound's career, notably small. One finds the common
indefinite some ("some opaque cloud," some white power,
"some strange peace," and somewhere, some-wise, some sync) and the Yeatsian dim ("woodlands dim," "swift dim ways," "dim forest," "dim allurement," "dim splendour," and "the soft, dim cloud of her hair"). Strange and mista are two frequently used words. Others are ephemeral, eternal, end-lessly, faint, secret, unnamed, unseen, formless, uncounted, and intangible. His growing concern for concretion and exactness led Pound to reduce this vocabulary during the next decade.

Abstract and learned words appear only moderately often. Again this lack may be attributed to Pound's strongly concrete approach. His life-long distaste for Milton may also have been a contributing factor here. In any event we do find such terms as effulgence, misplace-ment, corruption, decadence, semblance, unconfined, incre-ment, strickured, profane, extinction, diversity, felicity, unappeasable, and an early appearance of the significant usuries. Two poems unusually heavy in learned polysyl-lables seem to be imitations of Dante's lofty and highly abstract Paradiso style. The canzon, "Of Angels," con-tains, among others, magnificence, ascending, extending, similitude, beneficent, aquiline, microcline, lustrous, confounding, and amplitude. "Guillaume de Lorris Belated" has words like benign, contending, intelligence, equation, enfranished, transfusion, deductive, intellect, ferment,
and discerned. Neither poem, it might be added, appears in later collections.

Pound used many syntactical patterns. Sensitive to every available influence and bold in forging new modes of expression, he wrote in many styles during his apprenticeship. One of these had an archaic syntax, appropriate to his diction, which could be either formal or idiomatic. The passage below may have been patterned after the more serious canzone, although its structure may also have been inspired by the King James Bible:

Yea the lines hast thou laid unto me
in pleasant places,
And the beauty of this thy Venice
hast thou shown unto me
Until is its loveliness become unto me
a thing of tears.

("Night Litany," Exultations, p. 10)

More commonly syntax in the archaic poems tried to reproduce the living speech of past ages:

God! but the purple of the sky was deep!
Clear, deep, translucent, so the stars me seemed
Set deep in crystal; and because my sleep
--Rare visitor--came not,--the Saints I guardon
For that restlessness--Piere set to keep

One more fool's vigil with the hollyhocks.

("Piere Vidal Old," Exultations, p. 17)

When they came wi' a host to take our Man
His smile was good to see,
"First let these go!" quo' our Goodly Pere,
"Or I'll see ye damned," says he.
Aye he sent us out through the crossed high spears
And the scorn of his laugh rang free,
"Why took ye not me when I walked about
Alone in the town?" says he.

("Ballad of the Goodly Fere," *Axuitations*, p. 19)

Possibly to offset any sentimentality, Pound affected this
idiomatic manner for his jocular tribute to Browning—
though here it is also an imitation of Browning's own style:

Aye you're a man that! ye old mesmerizer
Tyin' your meanin' in seventy swadelin's,
One must of needs be a hang'd early riser
To catch you at worm turning. Holy Odds bodykins!

("Mesmerism," *Personae*, p. 20)

One notices that in all three passages the archaic quality
of the syntax has not been derived from such complex styles
as those in *Troilus and Criseyde* or the *Morte d'Arthur*, but
achieves its effect by occasional inversions ("the stars me
seemed," "my sleep...came not," "why took ye not me") and
colloquial constructions ("Aye you're a man that!," "One
must of needs," "I'll see ye damned"). This effect is in-
creased by archaic diction like *wi'*, *quo'*, *'i*, *aye*, *lief*.
Hence it is rarely, in the truest sense, an archaic syntax.

Even Pound could not altogether escape the powerful
influence of poetic oratory. While it is by no means typ-
ical, his "Revolt Against the Crepuscular Spirit in Modern
Poetry" is further proof that in him there lingered more
than a trace of Romanticism:
Great God, if men are grown but pale sick phantoms
That must live only in these mists and tempered
lights
And tremble for dim hours that knock o'er loud
Or tread too violent in passing them;

Great God, if these thy sons are grown such thin
ephemera,
I bid thee grapple chaos and beget
Some new titanic spawn to pile the hills and stir
This earth again.

(Personae, p. 54)

This poem, it is only fair to add, did not appear in any collections after 1910.

His readings in Browning and Yeats had shown Pound
the beauty of a direct, restrained syntax. During the second decade of his career—the period of Ripostes, Cathay,
Lustre, and Mauberley—this would become his dominant manner. But even in his earliest volume such a direct order
of words is apparent. This passage shows clear indebtedness to Yeats:

I have wrapped my tears in an ellum leaf
And left them under a stone
And now men call me mad because I have thrown
All folly from me, putting it aside
To leave the old barren ways of men.

("La Fraisne," Personae, p. 10)

"Francesca," a more mature poem, foreshadows the straightforward, uncluttered style of Imagism:

You came in out of the night
And there were flowers in your hands,
Now you will come out of a confusion of people,
Out of a turmoil of speech about you.

I who have seen you amid the primal things
Was angry when they spoke your name
In ordinary places.
I would that the cool waves might flow over
my mind,
And that the world should dry as a dead leaf,
Or as a dandelion seed-pod and be swept away,
So that I might find you again,
Alone.

(*Exultations*, p. 33)

There is not, I think, a single affectation of syntax here. The sentences are short, and structurally loose (as opposed to periodic. The lines are written "in the sequence of the musical phrase," but they also correspond to grammatical units in the sentence—-the only exception being the last line, where "alone" is deliberately isolated for emphasis.

"Language is made of concrete things," the poet wrote to Harriet Monroe in 1915, and added, "Abstractions are the reactions of things on the writer, not a creative act by the writer." This is one of many comments by Pound on the primacy of concretion in poetry. Both in theory and in practice he has always supported a poetry of *phanopoeia* ("a casting of images upon the visual imagination"). Though the Imagist movement he headed did not actually get under way until 1912, its origins dated from the years 1909 and 1910, when Pound met with T. E. Hulme and others in London to discuss literature and ideas. One result of those meetings was the now-famous Imagist credo, written by Pound, which stated: "An 'Image' is that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of
time...It is better to present one image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works. Neither his later poetry, didactic and garrulous as it has become, nor his later criticism shows any visible retreat from that position. And most of his readers would agree, I think, that his poetry's greatest strength has always resided in its fresh and beautiful imagery.

The influence of decadent Romanticism is powerfully evident in Pound's early imagery. Nurtured in his youth on Rossetti, Swinburne, and the fin-de-siècle poets, he inevitably used some of their concrete methods. Many of his early poems refute by example his dislike of the "crepuscular spirit." This passage, for example, seems to be indebted to the imagery of that Celtic crepuscular, W. B. Yeats:

I am torn, torn with thy beauty,  
O Rose of the sharpest thorn!  
O Rose of the crimson beauty,  
Why hast thou awakened the sleeper?  
Why hast thou awakened the heart within me,  
O Rose of the crimson thorn?

("Laudantes--II," Exultations, p. 27)

At other times his imagery was reminiscent of no particular poet, but of late Romanticism generally:

Now would I weave her portrait out of all dim splendour,  
Of Provence and far halls of memory,  
Lo, there come echoes, faint diversity  
Of blended bells at even's end, or  
As the distant seas should send her
The tribute of their trembling, ceaselessly
Resonant. Out of all dreams that be,
Say, shall I bid the deepest dreams attend her?

("Portrait," Exultations, p. 25)

Often the twilight tones gave way to another kind of Roman-
tic concretion—the opulent and bejewelled:

The moon is a great pearl in the waters of saphir;
Cool to my fingers the flowing waters.

("Aegupton," A Lume Spento, p. 46)

Purple and sapphire for the silver shafts
Of sun and spray all shattered at the bows...

("In Durance," Personae, p. 41)

When first I saw thee 'neath the silver mist,
Ruling thy bark of painted sandal-wood,
Did any know thee? By the golden sails
That clasped the ribbands of that azure sea,
Did any know thee save my heart alone?
O ivory woman with thy bands of gold,
Answer the song my luth and I have brought thee!

("Canzon: The Vision," Provençal, pp. 76-77)

Later Pound would balance this kind of ornament (which
has never, by the way, left his poetry entirely) with an
increasing amount of realistic imagery. The passages below
might be considered as two stages in a progression toward
realism. The first doubtless owes some of its starkness
to the Villon original; but the second has been drawn, like
Robinson's portraits, from a live model:

Towards the Noel that morte saison
(Christ make the shepherd's homage dear!)
Then when the grey wolves everychone
Drink of the winds their chill small-beer
And lap o' the snows food's gueredon
Then makyth my heart his yule-tide cheer

("Villon oud for this Yule," Personae, p. 16)

Scrawny, be-spectacled, out at heels,

...........
Such an one as women draw away from
For the tobacco ashes scattered on his coat
And three days' beard:

("Famam Librosque Cano," Personae, pp. 24-25)

Pound has always been rather lukewarm toward Renaissance poetry, at least as it compares with medieval poetry. The passage below, comparing Cavalcanti with Petrarch (Pound considers these poets representative of their respective periods), may help to explain both his indifference to the Renaissance and his attitude toward an important kind of concretion:

In [the art of poetry] the gulf between Petrarch's capacity and Guido's is the great gulf, not of degree, but of kind. In Guido the 'figure', the strong metamorphic or 'picturesque' expression is there with purpose to convey or to interpret a definite meaning. In Petrarch it is ornament, the prettiest ornament he could find, but not an irreplaceable ornament, or one that he couldn't have used just about as well somewhere else.53

The point in question is the functional metaphor, the figurative expression that performs enough work in a poem to be integral and not merely pretty (or even beautiful) decoration. The Imagists would try to build a poetry on the functional metaphor alone; but Pound, even before he became
the high priest of Imagism, had learned to use this kind of figure. The Elizabethan conceit (for all that Pound thought the Elizabethans too verbose) may well have been a model for this poem:

Fine songs, fair songs, these golden usuries
her beauty earns as but just increment,
And they do speak with a most ill intent
Who say they give when they pay debtor's fees.

I call him bankrupt in the courts of song
Who hath her gold to eye and pays her not,
Defaulter do I call the knave who hath got
Her silver in his heart and doth her wrong.

("Octave," Provençal, p. 63)

But other images were more direct, fusing idea and object "in an instant of time":

As bright white drops upon a leaden sea
Grant so my songs to this grey folk may be.

("Grace Before Song," Personæ, p. 9)

"Thank you, whatever comes." And then she turned
And, as the ray of sun on hanging flowers
Fades when the wind hath lifted them aside,
Went swiftly from me.


Swift came the Loba, as a branch that's caught,
Torn, green and silent in the swollen Rhone,
Green was her mantle, close, and wrought
Of some thin silk stuff that's scarce stuff at all,
But like a mist wherethrough her white form fought.

("Pierè Vidal Old, Exultations, p. 17")

When Pound told Harriet Monroe that the language of poetry must depart "in no way from speech save by a height-
ened intensity (i.e., simplicity)" and that in poetry one must use "nothing that you couldn't, in some circumstance...actually say," he brought the Romantic theory of idiomatic poetry full circle; for these words are remarkably like Wordsworth's on the same subject. We have seen in Pound's poetic practice, as well, a drive toward the plain syntax of ordinary speech. But he could no more than Robinson write a slangy, artless imitation of Whitman. Though at first he admired the vitality of Sandburg and Lindsay, he came to find the 'working stiff' argot and the "higher vaudeville" as inartistic as Robinson doubtless did. Pound would meet the problem in another way.

His greatest contribution to the idiomatic mode was development of the one feature that Wordsworth--and a number of others--had either overlooked or denied about spoken language: the fact that its cadences are not those of iambic pentameter, the ballad stanza, or any such symmetrical form. They are irregular, broken, now hesitant, now rapid--constantly changing with the speaker's intentions and emotions. Pound's unsurpassed artistry in finding rhythms and forms to catch this living quality of spoken language is his significant accomplishment in the idiomatic mode: an accomplishment arising from his belief that "rhythm MUST have meaning," and cannot be "merely a careless dash off, with no grip and no real hold to the words and sense."54 In early years he frequently imitated the
affected speech of conventional poetry, as in the poem, "In Tempore Senectutis":

He saith: "Red spears bore the warrior dawn
Of old
Strange! Love, hast thou forgotten
The red spears of the dawn,
The pennants of the morning?"

She saith: "Nay, I remember, but now
Cometh the Dawn, and the Moth-Hour
Together with him; softly
For we are old."

(Personae, p. 23)

But in the opening strophes of "Marvoil" he scored an early success in the idiomatic manner:

Mel in this damn'd inn of Avignon,
Stringing long verse for the Burlatz;
All for one half-bald, knock-knee'd king of the Aragonese,
Alfonso, Quatro, poke-nose.

(Personae, p. 51)

By the time his magnum opus was under way, Pound had become master of a brilliant individual style. When Allen Tate referred to the Cantos as nothing but "talk, talk, talk," he was not suggesting a weakness but praising a transcendent achievement in idiomatic poetry. That the obsessive intrusion of non-literary matters would finally fragment, and then silence, this brilliant colloquy is very sad; but it should not blind us to the real accomplishment. I believe that Tate, in justifying his stand on the Bollingen prize controversy of 1949, spoke for most
serious literary men of our time when he asserted: "I had become convinced that he had done more than any other man to regenerate the language...of English verse."\textsuperscript{56}

The early poetry, as we have seen, does not display this mastery--only the first signs of it. What Pound wrote before 1910 was juvenilia, some of it as bad as youthful verse can be; but even the worst of it, I think, has a verve, a vitality quite unlike most work in this period. This vitality, as I have attempted to demonstrate, owes much to Pound's concern for the sound, rhythm, meaning, and contextual significance of words. If I have frequently judged the poetry in terms of Pound's mature work it is because his career illustrates what most of the others do not: an organic process of maturation that produced one of the century's great literary artists.
Chapter Six

OTHER VOICES

For a period in which so little poetry of permanent value appears to have survived, the decade between 1900 and 1910 had a surprisingly large body of practicing poets. This paradox can be explained in part by pointing out a common misapprehension: since periods of great literary fertility are usually characterized by the appearance of talented writers in large numbers, one infers quite logically that during periods of decline or transition the converse should be true. Actually during a period of decadence the existing traditions of poetry, having been thoroughly explored in all directions, are more easily available than ever before. Thus while it is almost impossible to write first-rate poetry at such a time, it is exceedingly easy to write second or third-rate verse.

Approaching the paradox from its other end, we may explain it by the fact that in casting off Romantic tradition so violently, the second-decade poets (whose attitudes have formed the tastes of the present generation) failed to make necessary distinctions. The passage of time may disclose much valuable poetry from the "twilight interval," once terms like "Romantic" and "genteeel" no longer make
critical hackles rise and we can sufficiently overcome the distaste associated with a traditionally "dead" period to examine its poetry with some care.

As I have stated in the Introduction, my choice of poets for this study was made with an eye both to treating major figures and to selecting a representative body of poetry, one that would show something like the entire range of poetic language during the decade. Hence while I could not (nor did I want to) avoid consideration of poets like Moody, Robinson, and Pound, I might on the other hand have selected from a number of others to replace such poets as Woodberry, Sterling, or Lodge. It is these others to whom I should like now to turn my attention, if only for a brief space. For consistency's sake let us follow the same grouping of "conservatives," "transitionals," and "new poets" that has so far served.

Among conservative poets, the most prominent of the time were those august (and by then elderly) figures of the genteel tradition: Thomas Bailey Aldrich, Edmund Clarence Stedman, and Richard Watson Gilder. Actually Aldrich published no new poetry during the time, but he lived and wrote until 1907, continuing to exert a powerful influence on the poetic tastes of the magazine-reading public. Stedman had long before abandoned such experiments in realism as "How Old Brown Took Harper's Ferry" and "Israel Freyer's Bid for Gold"; his Mater Coronata (1901) demonstrated that
the surprisingly courageous champion of Whitman had not
absorbed much from the master, unless it might be Whit­
man's distressing weakness for declamation:

Thou who hast made thy sons coequal all,
The least one of thy prodigy a peer
Wearing for worth not birth his coronal,—
The watchmen on thy wall
Wax proud this sundawn of thy cyclic year;

Until his death in 1909, Gilder's work appeared regu-
larly in his own Century magazine and in others equally
prominent and widely circulated. To misapply Pound's line,
Gilder was "unaffected by the march of events"; as late as
1907 he adjured readers as follows:

Chide not the poet that he strives for beauty,
If still forthright he chants the thing he would,—

If still he knows, nor can escape, the dire
Necessity and burden of straight speech;

Not his the fault should music haunt the line,
If to the marrow cleaves the lyric knife.

And upon Aldrich's death he composed a lyric that might
serve as a textbook study in decorum, restraint, and Ro-
mantic triteness:

Ever when slept the poet his dreams were music,
And in sweet song lived the dear dream once more.
So when from sleep and dreams again he waked--
Out from the world of symbols passing forth
Into that spirit-world where all is real--
What memoried music, now and exquisite,
Shall strike on ears celestial,--where he walks
Reverent among the immortal melodists.
The younger conservatives displayed more energy, but
they ventured little further from the safety of tradition.
Madison Cawein, one of Howells' discoveries, wrote of na-
ture much like the Georgians, but without their simplicity
of syntax and plainness of vocabulary. In rare moments of
intensity Cawein could assimilate the raw experience of
life (he was a Kentucky bartender) into a poem of stark
images and unvarnished language:

The human quarry with clay-clogged hair
And eyes of terror who waits there.

That glares and crouches and rising then
Hurts elbows and curses at dogs and men.

Until the blow of a gun-butt lays
Him stunned and bleeding upon his face.

A rope, a prayer, and an oak-tree near,
And a score of hands to swing him clear.

A grim, black thing for the setting sun
And the moon and the stars to look upon.4

His normal mode, however, spanned the narrow range between
pretentious and elegance:

Already spicewood and the sassafras
Like fragrant flowers, begin
To tuft their boughs with tepas, ere they spin
Their beryl emopies—a glimmering mass,
Mist blurred, above the deepening grass.5

A friend of Robinson, Moody, and Torrence was the
beautiful Boston poetess, Josephine Preston Peabody. Al-
though her efforts in the 1900-1910 decade were directed
mainly toward verse drama, Miss Peabody also frequently
published lyric poems in the magazines. Robinson's correspondence with her shows that he valued her literary judgment; but she failed, apparently, to learn from the master what was necessary to break the Romantic curse. Here is a reasonably typical specimen of her work:

**Beautiful Mother, I** have toiled all day;  
And I am wearied. And the day is done.  
Now, while the wild brooks run  
Soft by their furrows,—fading, gold to gray,  
Their laughters turn to musing—ah, let me  
Hide here my face at thine unheeding knee,  
Beautiful Mother: if I be thy son.

The technical advances made by Swinburne were exploited thoroughly by a group of clever but shallow versifiers whose chief defect was that while they could sometimes avoid the emotional excesses of decadent Romanticism by a rather impressive restraint, they could never turn this agility to serious purposes. They experimented in old French forms like the roundel, the ballade, the virelai, and the chant royal, but with none of Pound's eager curiosity. Their form inevitably dominated their content. Guy Wetmore Carryl was probably the most gifted of a group that included Clinton Scollard, Frank Dempster Sherman, and (earlier) Henry Cuyler Bunner. This passage will illustrate Carryl's adroit, brittle talent:

The dragon bowed nicely,  
And very concisely  
He stated the reason he'd called:  
He made the disclosure
With frigid composure.
   King Philip was simply appalled.

He demanded for eating,
   a fortnight apart,
The monarch's ten daughters,
   all dear to his heart.
"And now you'll produce," he
Concluded, "the juicy
And succulent Lucie
   By wa', of start."?

Although Moody, Lodge, and Stickney were probably the
ablest of the transitional poets, several others made note­
worthy efforts toward major expression. None, however, were
any more successful in breaking free of tradition. Typi­
cally their poems ranged, without any discernible pattern
of development, from opulent to spare, emotional to ironic,
trite to fresh. Of those who lived into the next decades,
none appears to have been deeply affected by the new poetry.
Having come to maturity under the Romantic dispensation,
they seemed unable to shake off its effects permanently.
The poetry, for example, that Anna Hempstead Branch wrote
in the 1930's showed about the same extremes as these two
passages from her earlier work:

For forty years he grew merry and fat,
   His speech was slow and his chin was double.
   He had six children--think of that--
And his good wife never gave him trouble.
   His chin was heavy, his eyes were meek,
   He went to his work at nine on Monday,
   He cheated his neighbors through the week,
And paid his debt to the church on Sunday.
The battlements of Heaven, are they begirt with night
That I should fly forsaken like a faint moth towards
the light?
Past the pale flight of planets the revel waxes loud,
But my wings, they are grown heavy with the cold
wrack of the cloud.9

Arthur Davidson Ficke, whose poems Edna Millay greatly
admired, was one of the most widely published magazine poets
of his generation. Best known as a writer of sonnets,
Ficke had the commandable qualities of vivid imagery and
emotional restraint; but his imagery and diction often, as
in the lines below, labelled him a late Romantic:

I know it all is true. For I have seen
The light upon the Aegean's purple waves;
And I have heard the silence in the caves
Where wreathed sarcophagi in darkness lean;
And I have smelt the breath that from the green
Slopes of Hymettus all my sense enslaves;
And in Dadona's whispering forest-naves
Felt the dim Presences that hold demesne.10

When Edwin Markham's "The Man With the Hoe" appeared
in the San Francisco Examiner early in 1889, many who had
been dissatisfied with the polite prettiness of current
American verse believed that another Whitman had arrived.
Markham lived to be a white-haired poet-patriarch, but his
artistic timidity hampered the kind of realistic language
that his social-protest themes demanded. He became the
classic example in our century of a one-poem poet. "Russia
Arise" (published in 1906 and dedicated to Maxim Gorki) is
interesting as prophetic utterance; it fails as a poem be-
cause the incongruity between radical idea and conservative
language is too great:

Rise, Russia, to the great hour, rise;
The dead are looking from the skies!
And God's hand, terrible with light,
Uproaching from the Arctic night,
Wrties on the North with torch of fire--
Wrties in one word the world's desire--
Wrties awfully the word of Man
Across the vast auroral span--
Wrties "Freedom!" that shall topple kings
And shake to dust their treasonings.

More successful in a compromise between emotionalism
and plain language was Lisette Woodworth Reese. For fifty
years this Baltimore schoolteacher produced lyrics much
like those of Emily Dickinson: compact, restrained, often
ironic notations of a keen sensibility held in genteel re-
straint. Her famous sonnet, "Tears," with its imagery of
desolation, is somewhat more carefully executed than most
other poems which have struck the public fancy:

A call to battle, and the battle done
Ere the last echo dies within our ears;
A rose choked in the grass; an hour of fears;
The gusts that past a darkening shore do beat;
The burst of music down an unlistening street--

Her characteristic expression was more terse, less conven-
tional in diction:

Sage, lavender, and rue,
For body's hurt and ill,
For fever and for chill;
Rosemary, strange with dew,
For sorrow and its smart,
For breaking of the heart.

The work of Miss Reese needs revaluation, I believe. While
it is at best a minor poetry, it nevertheless has felicities of language that make it worth reading.

Considered in the years around 1900 as promising a poet as Moody, Ridgely Torrence revealed in his work many of the same virtues and vices as Moody. His first volume, *The House of a Hundred Lights* (1900), is the uneven but somewhat impressive display of a lavish, undisciplined talent which seems to have been nurtured on equal parts of Rossetti and Byron. In the next few years Torrence wisely reduced his cosmic scope and henceforth was more wary of broad, general ideas. He did not, on the other hand, always succeed in restraining his rhetoric. A poem like "The Lesser Children," for example, protests the hunting of small game animals in a language more suitable to odes on immortality or epics justifying the ways of God to man:

Shall Nature's only pausing be by men invaded?
Or shall we lay grief's faggots on her shoulders bare?
Has she not borne enough?
Soon will the mirroring woodland pools begin
To soo her,
And her sad immemorial passion come upon her;
Lo, would you add despair unto despair?14

That Torrence was more than a run-of-the-mill transitional poet is clearly demonstrated, I think, in such a poem as "Three O'Clock (Morning)," which appeared a few years after "The Lesser Children." Here the imagery is
both startling and precise. The vocabulary is Robinsonian: plain, strongly monosyllabic, and almost totally free of Romantic "poeticisms." Torrence appears here to have learned what was so difficult for poets of his generation to comprehend: that emotion can be most effectively communicated by implication. The poem is so well unified in all respects that to quote less than the entirety would be unfair:

The jewel-blue electric flowers
Are sold upon their iron trees.
Upraised, the deadly harp of rails
Whines for its interval of ease.
The stones keep all their daily speech
Buried, but can no more forget
Than would a water-vacant beach
The hour when it was wet.

A whitened few wane out like moons,
Ghastly, from some torn edge of shade;
A drowning one, a reeling one,
And one still loitering after trade.
On high the condor of a clock
Portions the dark with solemn sound.
The burden of the bitten rock
Moans up from underground.

Far down the street a shutting door
Echoes the yesterday that fled
Among the days that should have been,
Which people cities of the dead.
The banners of the steam unfold
Upon the towers to meet the day;
The lights go out in red and gold,
But Time goes out in gray.

His editorial duties and his several years' preoccupation with verse plays combined, apparently, to reduce Torrence's output of lyric poetry. His poems appeared from time to time in the magazines, but he published only two small
books of non-dramatic verse—**Hesperides** (1925) and **Poems** (1941)—during the rest of his life. Though his later work is generally less stilted in diction and syntax than the bulk of his early poetry, it seems to have been little influenced by the newer experimental modes of poetic expression: it is correct, careful, and without much vitality.

Possibly most interesting of all these "other voices" is the early work of several poets who would figure importantly in the "poetic renaissance" of 1912. Among this apprentice work are poems by Masters, Lindsay, Frost, Eliot, Stevens, Amy Lowell, Sara Teasdale, and William Carlos Williams. Some of these poems are no more than literary curiosities, while others point clearly toward mature work of permanent value.

None is more curious—or less prophetic of later attainments—than a poem by "Webster Ford" (Edgar Lee Masters), entitled "Separation." A double roundel from **Sons and Lovers** (1910), it typifies the conventionality of this poet's early period. "Separation" could have been written by almost any poet of the time who remained loyal to Romantic standards of emotionalism and poetic diction. That it was written by the author of the **Spoon River Anthology** only a few years before that exemplar of unvarnished realism and prose-like cadences is remarkable indeed. The opening lines should be a sufficient sample:
I walked afield with your sweet soul—
(If heaven past joy could yield)
And sought again the wooded knoll;
I walked afield.

No longing ever yet was healed
By autumn's sunny dole,
For eyes by a remembrance sealed.18

Although Wallace Stevens' poems did not appear before a large audience until after 1918, he had been writing verse since undergraduate days. In many ways his college poetry is only a little less conventional than Masters' early verse:

Ah yes! beyond these barren walls
Two hearts shall in a garden meet,
And while the latest robin calls,
Her lips to his shall be made sweet.

And out above these gloomy tow'rs
The full moon tenderly shall rise
To cast its light upon the flow'rs,
And find him looking in her eyes.19

Yet in a poem like "Outside the Hospital" we see touches of an ironic realism that would become more and more common to American poetry as time went on:

See the blind and the lame at play,
There on the summer lawn—
She with her graceless eyes of clay,
Quick as a frightened fawn,
Running and tripping into his way
Whose legs are gone.18

And the "Ballade of the Pink Parasol" foreshadows Stevens' preoccupation with images of elegance:

Where is the roll of the old calash,
And the jog of the light sedan?
Whence Chloe's diamond brooch would flash
And conquer poor peeping man.
Answer me, where is the painted fan
And the candles bright on the wall;
Where is the coat of yellow and tan—
But where is the pink parasol? 19

Beyond this, one finds scarcely a hint of the poet's later manner. Stevens' language was still at this early stage dominated by Romantic tradition: literary contractions and inversions, conventional archaisms, and decorative imagery.

After a small, immature volume in her youth, Amy Lowell published no more until 1910, when "A Fixed Idea" appeared in the Atlantic, indicating that in her years of apprenticeship she had learned to shake off the worst excesses of Romantic language. This sonnet tends to be rather more abstract than one might expect from an Imagist-in-embryo, but the idea has some complexity and the benefit of an ordered syntax:

What torture lurks within a single thought
When grown too constant; and however kind,
However welcome still, the weary mind
Ashes with its presence. Dull Remembrance taught
Remembers on unceasingly, unsought
The old delight is with us but to find
That all recurring joy is pain refined,
Become a habit, and we struggle, caught. 20

While the central image of the sonnet may have been ill-chosen, it is nevertheless sustained and integrated with the thought:

You lie upon my heart as on a nest,
Folded in peace, for you can never know
How crushed I am with having you at rest
Heavy upon my life. I love you so
You bind my freedom from its rightful quest.
In mercy lift your drooping wings and go.81

In the first twenty years of its existence Poetry: A Magazine of Verse often featured the simple, carefully wrought verses of Sara Teasdale. Her reputation during those years may seem surprisingly high to a generation nourished on the complexities of Pound and Eliot; but the fact that she managed to avoid the worst of late Romantic triteness gives her work historical significance. Miss Teasdale’s first volume, Sonnets to Dase, appeared in 1907. In its pages one sees an individual idiom beginning to work its way free of conventional language:

Oh face embowered and shadowed by thy hair,
Some lotus blossom on a darkened stream!
If I have ever pictured in a dream
My guardian angel, she is like to this,
Her eyes know joy, yet sorrow lingers there,
And on her lips the shadow of a kiss.82

William Carlos Williams’ Poems (1909) was probably best appraised in Ezra Pound’s frank comment to the author: “As proof that W.C.W. has poetic instincts the book is valuable....There are fine lines in it, but nowhere I think do you add anything to the poets you have used as models.”83 One poem from this period, a twelve-line “sonnet” written in Germany,84 foreshadows Williams’ later distaste for rhetoric, abstraction, and affected diction. Yet the poem
(especially the last stanzas) seems quite conservative when compared with his 1915 collection, The Temper:

Alone today I mounted that steep hill
On which the Wartburg stands, here Luthcr dwelt
A year through at his labors, here he spelt
The German Bible out by God's good will.

The birds piped ti-ti-tuh and as I went
I thought how Katharina von Boro knelt
At Grimma, idle she, waiting to melt
Her surprised heart in folds less straitly meant.

As now, it was March there, lo! he'll fulfill
Today his mighty task, sing for content
Ye birds, pipe now! for now 'tis love's wing bent
Work sleeps, love wakes, sing! and the glad air thrill.

Although Vachel Lindsay had been writing and occasionally publishing poems several years before 1910, few signs of his mature style were evident until that year. The gentle editors of the Outlook (Lyman Abbott and Hamilton Wright Mabie) were doubtless happy to accept these moralistic verses from a "Field Worker in the Anti-Saloon League of Illinois":

King Arthur's knights have come again.
They challenge everywhere
The foes of Christ's Eternal Church.
Her incense drowns the air.
The heathen knighthood cover and curse
To hear the bugles ring,
But spears are set, the charge is on.
Hail Arthur shall he King!

In the remaining two stanzas Arthur is replaced as prohibitionist hero by Cromwell and Lincoln, respectively.
This poem is, I think, a direct ancestor of "General William Booth," with its hammering "fourteener" hymn cadence and incantatory refrain. Images like "sodden, poisonous band" and "flower-bright towns" (in the second stanza) are also an anticipation of the bold strokes in which Lindsay would later paint.

Robinson liked to think of himself as the most obscure poet of this period, but time would reveal that another New Englander worked for almost twenty years in an obscurity so total that it made Robinson's seem like the very pinnacle of fame. Robert Frost, who had been making poems since his nineteenth year, did not find a reading public until his thirty-eighth, when *A Boy's Will* (1913) was published in England. During these years only a handful of his poems attained publication in the magazines, but these show unmistakably enough that a master of plain speech was in the making. "The Flower Boat" contains a few traces of the Romantic heritage in this stanza:

And I know from that Alysian freight
She will brave but once more the Atlantic weather,
When dory and fisherman sail by fate
To seek for the Happy Isles together. 28

And "A Line-Storm Song" has in its euphonist meter and refrain something of the traditional:

The line-storm clouds fly tattered and swift,
The road is forlorn all day,
Where a myriad snowy quartz-stones lie
And the hoof-prints vanish away;
The roadside-flowers, too wet for the bee,
Expend their bloom in vain.
Come over the hills and far with me,
And be my love in the rain. 

But with "The Quest of the Oriole" and "Into Mine Own," as the two passages below reveal, Frost's mature manner had already become evident:

I only knelt and, putting the boughs aside,
Looked, or at most
Counted them all to the buds in the copse's depth--
Pale as a ghost.

Then I arose and silent wandered home,
And I for one
Said that the fall might come and whirl of leaves,
For summer was done.

One of my wishes is that those dark trees,
So old and firm they scarcely show the breeze,
Were not, as 'twere, the merest mask of gloom,
But stretched away unto the edge of doom.

Frost seems to have had in common with Robinson the early maturation of an individual, un-Romantic style, one that would remain unchanged in its essentials through a long, prolific career. Robinson's perfection of the syllogistic structure would be paralleled by Frost's development of a colloquial-narrative structure; Robinson's mask was that of the somber New England philosopher, Frost's that of the shrewd Down-East farmer. Through their efforts the poetry of plain speech has reached a high level of achievement in our time.
In the undergraduate verse of T. S. Eliot is the same kind, if not the same degree, of precision and restraint in language that would characterize his mature style. But "Song," the earliest available poem from this period, is quite conventional in imagery:

The hedgerow bloomed with flowers still
No withered petals lay beneath;
But the wild roses in your wreath
Were faded, and the leaves were brown.32

"In Circe's Palace" contains evidence that the fin-de-siècle tradition of imagery had not passed Eliot by:

Panthers rise from their lairs
In the forest which thickens below,
Along the garden stairs
The sluggish python lies;
The peacocks walk, stately and slow,
And they look at us with the eyes
Of men whom we knew long ago.33

Sometime during 1909, however, Eliot began to work in a new idiom,34 the result of his readings in Laforgue and the Jacobean dramatists. "Humoresque," an acknowledged imitation of Laforgue, is an early attempt to adapt that poet's "conversational-ironic" style into English:

"Why don't you people get some class?
(Feebly contemptuous of nose),
"Your damned thin moonlight, worse than gas--
"Now in New York"--and so it goes.35

"Nocturne" seems to anticipate the studied blend of banality and horror found in the Sweeney poems:
Blood looks effective on the moonlit ground--
The hero smiles; in my best mode oblique
Rolls toward the moon a frenzied eye profound.

And in the precisely-cadenced incongruities of "Spleen"
is an early but unmistakable sketch of the celebrated Mr. Prufrock:

And Life, a little bald and gray,
Languid, fastidious, and bland,
Waits, hat and gloves in hand,
Punctilious of tie and suit
(Somewhat impatient of delay)
On the doorstep of the Absolute.
Chapter Seven

A NOTE ON POETIC LANGUAGE
AFTER 1910

The forty-odd years since 1910 have witnessed vast changes in the theory and practice of poetic language. In order to place this study in perspective it will be necessary to outline broadly the directions these changes have taken. Such an outline can best be done, I think, by making a distinction between the changes which occurred in the revolutionary decade following 1910, and those which we may say are characteristic of the whole period from 1910 to the approximate present. As I have indicated throughout the previous three chapters, many of the linguistic innovations later credited to the revolution or "renaissance" of 1912 had their origin somewhat earlier. There was, nevertheless, coeval with the founding of Poetry: A Magazine of Verse in America and the Imagist movement in England, a concerted revolt against existing standards of poetic language. This negative aspect of modern poetry—the deliberate, sometimes violent throwing-off of Romantic tradition—is the key to understanding what happened to American poetry in the second decade of this century.

First, there was a revolt against conventional metric,
most memorably expressed in Masters' portrait of Petit the poet, whose cadences were like "Seeds in a dry pod, tick, tick, tick." Poets' dissatisfaction here was not only with the sterile indifference to rhythmical nuance that could be found in many second-rate versifiers like Stedman and Gilder, but also with the euphonic excesses of Swinburne, Lanier, and their kind. Metrical experimentation in this period, seeking an organic form, generally took three patterns (all of which were known to the period as *verse libre*): the precise, short-line syllabic verse of Imagism, best illustrated in the work of H. D.; the anti-metrical free verse of Sandburg and Masters, which seems to have arisen from the cadences of prose or of colloquial speech (though the influence of Whitman is also strong); and the "functional" rhythm of Pound and Eliot, which was neither as consistent nor as simple as the other two modes, since it tried to unify meter with other elements in the poem: imagery, emotion, and structure.

The new poetry also found the available vocabulary of poetry quite unsuitable to its purposes. Four sources of dissatisfaction can be distinguished here, I think. One, of course, was the conventional diction which arose from a belief that certain words were innately "poetic," others not. A second, and related, element was the language of the euphonic mode: words used almost entirely for their aural beauty, hence also innately "poetic." A third was
the vocabulary of emotionalism, which had, by 1910, become almost as conventional and meaningless as the first. A fourth was abstractions, the result of a strenuous but often inartistic effort to make poetry the mere vehicle of broad, general ideas. Catholicity of vocabulary is mainly responsible for counteracting these conservative qualities: new subjects for poetry increased vocabulary both in size and kind; realistic and colloquial language, often harsh or prosaic, combatted emotionalism and euphonic prettiness; a more heavily concretised vocabulary overcame abstraction.

Changes in syntax were mainly a reaction against the grand manner: i.e., formal rhetoric applied indiscriminately to poetry for the same affective purposes as oratory. The forms that this reaction took ranged from the direct, simple syntax of expository prose (as in the Spoon River Anthology), through the looser colloquial structure of spoken American (Sandburg and Frost) and a careful, analytical pattern like that of syllogistic logic (Robinson), to the complete breakdown in some cases of all conventional syntax (Faulk's "Papyrus": "Spring......../Too long........../Gongula.....
......"

Since the new syntax frequently arose from a negative attitude--the avoidance of rhetorical formality--it did not show a consistent development in one direction. General tendencies were to eschew long periodic sentences, the rhetorical question, the outcry and exclamation, the
literary inversion (see Pound's terse comments on the "straddled adjective" in Chapter Five). Yet, inasmuch as the new poetry also championed freedom of emotion from genteel restraints, affective rhetorical structures were sometimes sanctioned: the work of Vachel Lindsay is a case in point.

The revolution in imagery has been too far-reaching and complex to be covered in any more than cursory fashion here. Its negative side was a dissatisfaction with the conventionally "poetic," the opulent and ornamental, and the mistily abstract. Conventional imagery was replaced in part by following Whitman's lead: the admission of new subject matter theretofore considered unsuited to poetry. Instances here would be Sandburg's "Chicago," Lindsay's "General William Booth," and Eliot's "Prufrock." Poets corrected a tendency toward Pre-Raphaelite opulence by deliberate spareness of metaphor. They replaced the vague abstractions of emotionalist poetry with the precise abstractions of scientific notation. Perhaps the best-known shift in conerative method was through the expedient of Imagism: the creation of what Ransom has called "physical poetry," precise attention to objects for their own sake. Eventually the tendency would be toward a poetry such as Emerson had hoped for, where thoughts would be clothed in appropriate images (cf. William Carlos Williams' battle
cry: "Say it! No ideas but in things.") and where, by extension of this belief, the image would be altogether functional—an element inseparably fused with structure, idea, emotion, and rhythm. During this second decade, however, we may say that imagery was more than anything else merely unconventional, an expression of revolt from the tradition.

Viewing the modernist period in its entirety, we find two important determinants of poetic language. One is that the whole matter of poetic creation has come to be seen by both poets and critics as primarily a problem in language. This belief that language, not idea or subject or emotion, is the first concern of the poet has an early expression in Pound's remark that "Poetry is a sort of inspired mathematics, which gives us equations... for the human emotions." The statement reflects a shift in language techniques from the affective to the realistic and the synthetic; in other words, poetic language began to be considered increasingly as a real entity in the poem, not merely a means for producing some special, possibly non-verbal, effect. Realism in language, taking its inspiration from poets like Browning and Whitman, worked toward exact, objective, and inclusive representation of incidents and objects in life. Synthesis attempted, by means of an "objective correlative" (to use the best-known of several nearly synonymous terms5)
to repair the "dissociation of sensibility" that had, many modern literary figures believed, hindered the development of poetry since a time early in the seventeenth century. In the interests of a perhaps higher realism, the synthesis tried to embrace emotion, idea, image, and rhythm--fusing them into an inseparable unity. But poets, whether their efforts were realistic or synthetic, have continued to see the reform of poetry as something achieved through careful attention to language--by various techniques: exact description of object and emotion, ironic detachment, the intellectual strength of wit and paradox, and the furthest possible extension of sense perceptions. F. O. Matthiessen's statement is both accurate and concise:

As we look back now to the second phase of the American renaissance, to the period between 1910 and 1930, we can observe, at least so far as poetry is concerned, the pervasive growth of the conception of the poet as craftsman instead of as inspired seer. We can observe also that during that period far more gifted poets emerged than during any other period in our history.

The second important belief about poetic language is one that has been voiced at other times, but never, I believe, with such insistence or deep seriousness. Arising inevitably from the preoccupation discussed in the paragraph above, it states that the poet's social function consists of keeping language alive and pure. In 1913 Pound offered this view tentatively:
Thought is perhaps important to the race, and language, the medium of thought's preservation, is constantly wearing out. It has been the function of poets to new-mint the speech, to supply the vigorous terms for prose....and poets may be "kept on" as conservators of the public speech.8

Eliot repeated this belief in firmer tones some years later:

We may say, then, that just as the first duty of a man qua citizen is to his country, so his first duty qua poet is to the language of his country. First, he has the duty to preserve that language: his use of it must not weaken, coarsen, or degrade it. Second, he has the duty to develop that language, to bring it up to date, to investigate its unexplored possibilities.9

And as recently as 1958, Allen Tate upheld its validity in forceful language:

It is the duty of the man of letters to supervise the culture of language, to which the rest of culture is subordinate, and to warn us when our language is ceasing to forward the ends proper to man.10

His task is to preserve the integrity, the purity, and the reality of language wherever and for whatever purpose it may be used. He must approach his task through the letter--the letter of the poem, the letter of the politician's speech, the letter of the law; for the use of the letter is in the long run our one indispensable test of the actuality of our experience.11

Discussing the social and political implications of this belief might be interesting, but that is not my purpose here. What I wish to point out is the importance
given to language by the poet, an importance not fully grasped until we compare it with the implications of Shelley's phrase, "unacknowledged legislators of the world" or with Arnold's belief that poetry would be an acceptable substitute for religion. This emphasis on language (rather than philosophy, or beauty, or morality) as the essential part of poetry is reflected in the major critical texts of our time: the writings of Pound, Eliot, Williams, Tate, Ransom, Winters, Cleanth Brooks, Warren, and the Englishmen Richards, Empson, Leavis, and Bateson. It has resulted in the contemporary conviction that the poem is first of all an object, an artifact made of language. And this heightened language awareness can be held responsible for both the strengths and weaknesses of modernist poetry: technical expertness and complexity, high originality, relative dearth of ideas, and obscurity.

In this study I hope that I have shown clearly enough what the opening sentences of Chapter One state: that modern American poetry by no means made a complete break with the Romantic tradition—that the seeds of every important new theory and technical innovation were contained in the receptive soil of Romanticism. The history of the modern period reveals further that a powerful strain of Romanticism has persisted in some of the most self-consciously avant-garde poets. This situation may be explained, I think
(though I cannot conveniently demonstrate it here), by the fact that while critical beliefs about poetry underwent vast changes in the early decades of this century, certain other concepts—such as the poet's role in society and poetry's relation to a dehumanizing age of science—have not changed for at least a century and a half. Hence Romantics and moderns still have a great deal in common.

Among the more outstanding Romantically-oriented moderns are E. E. Cummings, who often employs an out-of-date emotionalist vocabulary in ultra-modern metrical and syntactical contexts; Hart Crane, whose diction was often both emotional and traditionally "poetic", and whose syntax was clearly a late manifestation of the grand manner; Wallace Stevens, a frequent practitioner of traditional rhetoric. A large number of minor poets have made only slight concessions to modernism, usually in the form of a somewhat restrained vocabulary and syntax. Among these are Edna St. Vincent Millay, whose "lost generation" sophistication partly compensated for her conservative language; Minor Wylie, who imposed metaphysical devices on a basically Romantic language; and Robert Hillyer, whose language is direct and clear but whose poetry has never made any attempt to cope with the complex reality of the present.

One can continue such notation almost indefinitely, ending at last with the countless magazine and newspaper versifiers, who write as if nothing had happened to poetry since
Tennyson's maiden volume dropped from the presses. A momentary resurgence of emotionalism occurred in the thirties, when the proletarian poets attempted to use poetry as a medium of propaganda. Time has mercifully covered most of their efforts; and today the only unrepentant survivor of the débâcle, a devoted emotionalist and a confirmed enemy to craftsmanship, is Kenneth Patchen.

The purpose of this study has been, as with all historically grounded research, the making of distinctions. If its examination of poetic language at a crucial period of American literary history has done anything to account for the very great differences between nineteenth and twentieth-century poetry, it will have accomplished my primary intention. If, despite this concern with differences, some trace of a continuous tradition still can be found, a secondary purpose will have been fulfilled. And if I have transmitted, however imperfectly, the notions that poetry is in any age a very difficult art (even when badly practised) and that poets are men with an unusual capacity for hard, unpromising work, I will feel that the poets discussed in this dissertation may have been somewhat recompensed for the dissecting-room indignities I have performed on their poetry.
INTRODUCTION


2. That the distinction between Romantic and Victorian is in many other respects important I should not wish to deny.


4. Originally it was my intention to consider verse drama along with the other poetry. All of the eight poets but Robinson and Pound experimented in this medium, and during the 1900-1910 decade there seemed to be a revival of the form. But as my research progressed I became increasingly aware of special problems, and decided that the language of verse drama would require separate treatment. Generally speaking, verse drama in the period made no significant advance over that of the previous century. It imitated Shakespeare and Milton—without much skill; its language was either bombastic and high-flown or unimaginatively archaic. The realist
drama, following Ibsen, was being written in prose.

5. Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion (1942), Major Adjectives in English Poetry (1948), and The Continuity of Poetic Language (1951). All were published at Berkeley, California.


CHAPTER ONE


3. Ibid., p. 87.

4. Ibid., p. 88.


6. Ibid., 8.


11. Ibid., p. 572.

12. Ibid., pp. 574-575.


21. Logan Pearsall Smith, Words and Idioms (Boston, 1925).


30. Hallam Tennyson, Alfred Lord Tennyson, A Memoir (New
York, 1898), I, 268.


34. *Biographie Literarie*, p. 3.


44. *Biographia Literaria*, pp. 11, 12.


54. Whipple, p. 233.


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CHAPTER TWO


9. Here are a few of the more obvious echoes: Milton— "Whether from Baal's stone obscene,/Or from the shrine serene/Of God's pure altar brought" (123-125); Shakespeare— "After our little hour of strut and rave,/With all our pasteboard passions and desires," (84-85) and "That is best blood that hath most iron in it,/To edge resolve with." (284-285); Emerson— "Nature, they say, doth dote,/And cannot make a man,/Save on some worn-out plan/Repeating us by rote" (157-160); Tennyson— "Boom, cannon, boom, to all the winds and waves!/Clash out, glad bells, from every rocking-steeple!" (381-382). I do not intend to imply that all or even most of emotionalist poetry is imitative; but I do feel it nece-
sary to mention that a poetry written without conscious attention to every detail of composition runs the risk, in proportion to the poet's bookishness, of picking up stray scraps of half-remembered reading.

10. An excellent demonstration of this point is George Rylands' "English Poets and the Abstract Word," Essays and Studies, XVI (1930), 53-84.


18. Tennyson may appear to be treated unjustly here. In fairness to his great talents I must add that I do not think of him as a mere technician, but as a poet whose concrete and euphonic accomplishments were of
a high order. His imaginative powers, in the more
profound sense of that term, were not as great as
those of Keats, however.

19. Cleanth Brooks has an illuminating discussion of
nineteenth vs. twentieth-century metaphor in Chapter
One of Modern Poetry and the Tradition (Chapel Hill,
1939).


22. Complete Writings of James Russell Lowell (Cambridge,
Mass., 1914), XI, 5-79.


24. "The Three Voices of Poetry," Atlantic Monthly,
CXIXII (April, 1954), pp. 38-44.

25. Selected Poems of Emily Dickinson, ed. Conrad Aiken

CHAPTER THREE

1. Louise Bogan, Achievement in American Poetry, 1900-
1950 (Chicago, 1951), pp. 3-4.


The most amusing is John Macy's "The State of Pseudo-
Poetry at the Present Time" (*Bookman*, XXVII [1908],
513-517), a satiric essay, complete with parodies,
which has as its theme the following: "We who live in
the flats beneath the Victorian plateau try every kind
of poetry and succeed in none." Most frequently voiced
in these articles was the complaint that the age was
too commercial and mechanized for poetry to be success-
ful. Such an attitude may help to account for the
"artiness" of much poetry in this period: in the or-
nate, poets found escape from an unpleasant world.

6. "Spenser," *The Torch and Other Lectures and Addresses*
(New York, 1920), p. 83. These essays date from 1903
and 1906.


12. New York, 1903. My study does not include *The North
Shore Watch (1890) and "The Players' Elegy on the Death of Edwin Booth" (dated 1893), although they appear in this collected volume. I have included Wild Eden (1899) since it appeared only a year before the decade of this study and does not, in any important respect, differ from Woodberry's later work.


15. The rose and the lily have conventional symbolic values for Woodberry: the first of sensuous beauty and the second of purity. But though they appear frequently in the poet's work, these symbols appear to have no unusual significance.


17. Ibid., 308.

18. Ibid., 311.


22. Robinson Jeffers, the Man and the Artist, p. 18.

23. Ibid., p. 4.


25. I have not been able to locate this anywhere except in Gregory and Zaturenska, where it is quoted (p. 56) without reference to its source. Possibly it is from the also untraceable "essay on tendencies in modern poetry" mentioned by Joseph Noel, *Footloose in Arcadia* (New York, 1940), p. 313.

26. San Francisco, 1903. My text has been the second edition (1907). Hereafter cited as *Testimony*.


29. After reading the manuscript Bierce sent a letter
to Sterling, which reads in part: "If I could find a flaw in the poem, I should quickly call your attention to it...No English poem of equal length has so bewildering a wealth of imagination. Not Spenser himself has flung such a profusion of jewels into so small a casket. It takes the breath away." Noel, Footloose in Arcadia, p. 165.


32. New York, 1901. Title on the binding is incorrectly printed The Hermit of Carmel And Other Poems. All citations of Santayana's poetry are from this book.


35. Gregory and Zaturenska, p. 69.


37. Ibid., p. 599.


39. Interpretations, p. 255.


44. *Interpretations,* p. 270.


46. This seems to me quite distinct from Arnold's conviction that poetry would eventually replace religion as a criticism of life (pp. 35-36, *supra*). Santayana clearly indicates his belief that poetry is secondary in importance to religion.


50. Schilpp, p. 599.

CHAPTER FOUR

1. Henry Adams, The Life of George Cabot Lodge (Boston, 1911), passim. Santayana, in a letter to William Lyon Phelps discussing The Last Puritan, said: "An important element in the tragedy of Oliver...is drawn from the fate of a whole string of Harvard poets in the 1880's and 1890's....Now all those friends of mine, Stickney especially, of whom I was very fond, were visibly killed by the lack of air to breathe. People were kind and appreciative to them, as they were to me, but the system was deadly, and they hadn't any alternative tradition (as I had) to fall back upon; and of course...they hadn't the strength of a great intellectual hero who can stand alone." Van Wyck Brooks, New England: Indian Summer (New York, 1940), p. 447n.

2. The Bright Medusa (Urbana, Ill., 1952), pp. 46-47.

4. Gregory and Zaturenska, p. 36.


17. Poems (Boston, 1901). These have all been incorporated into the collected volume.

18. Matthiessen, op. cit., p. 94.


21. Introduction to Poems and Dramas of George Cabot Lodge, 2 vols. (Boston and New York, 1911), I, xiii. All citations of Lodge's verse are from these volumes.

22. Adams, Life of George Cabot Lodge, p. 150.

23. Letter to Langdon Mitchell, October, 1903. Life, p. 126. A large part of Adams' biography is made up of such letters to friends and relatives.


27. *Poems* (Boston, 1908), *The Great Adventure* (Boston, 1908), and *The Soul's Inheritance* (Boston, 1909). All are included in the collected volumes (see Note 21).


29. Review of *Poems and Dramas; Literary Digest*, XLII (1911), 1256.


37. Ibid., 291.
38. Ibid., 222.

39. Ibid., 222.

40. Riggs, p. 207.


42. Ibid., 101.


44. The Poems of Trumbull Stickney, ed. George Cabot Lodge, William Vaughn Moody, and John Ellerton Lodge (Boston and New York, 1905). This collection contains Stickney's earlier volume, Dramatic Verses (Boston, 1902), as well as later poems, juvenilia, and fragments. Since his career covered only twelve years, I have considered in examination of Stickney virtually everything except the earliest, most obviously juvenile poems. All citations are from the collected volume.


46. Edmund Wilson, p. 530.

47. Ibid., p. 529.

CHAPTER FIVE

1. After 1905, and largely as a result of President Roosevelt's patronage, Robinson began to place his poems in the magazines. Between 1894 and 1905, however, he could not sell a single poem; his only magazine appearances were a few poems in the Harvard Monthly and a "little magazine" edited in Gardiner, The Globe. See Hermann Hagedorn, Edwin Arlington Robinson, A Biography (New York, 1938), p. 212, and Emery Neff, Edwin Arlington Robinson (New York, 1948), p. 189.

2. I have used the second edition of Captain Craig (New York, 1905) and the first edition of The Town Down the River (New York, 1910). In this study I have not considered the 1905 edition of The Children of the Night, since it is only a reprint of work done in the eighteen-nineties.


5. Boston, 1896. Most of the poems in this volume, along with new work, were reissued as *The Children of the Night* (Boston, 1897).


7. The text for this and the following passage are from the 1914 Scribner edition. This "Octave" was not included with the others in later collections.

8. Quoted in Hagedorn, p. 178. This appears to be part of a letter dated January, 1901, which is printed in *Selected Letters*, pp. 35-37, but without this passage.


16. The comment on Donne deserves quotation: "He is both dogmatic and ancient... and hardly to be considered apart from his period.... Donne doesn't seem to me to interpret much more than a sort of half-mystical sexual uneasiness and a rather uninteresting religious enthusiasm." Letter to John Hays Gardiner, November 2, 1898. Selected Letters, p. 15.


18. Ibid., p. 168.

19. Ibid., p. 181.


23. See p. 29 and p. 90, supra.

24. The letters to H. D. Smith in Untriangulated Stars (see Note 17) are a detailed record of Robinson's reading during the formative years.

25. For the sake of brevity I have omitted quotation here, since the poem's intricate design cannot be demonstrated by citing less than thirty-two lines. Barnard, pp. 75-77, analyses the metric of this poem in more detail.

26. Review of Captain Craig; Book Buyer, XXV (1908), 489.


29. Pound himself would probably not admit Robinson to this category, since he seems to restrict logopoeia principally to Jules Laforgue and to passages in
30. Morton Dauwen Zabel, "Edwin Arlington Robinson," *Commonweal*, XVII (1933), 437. In all fairness I must state that except for this point Mr. Zabel's essay is a model of intelligence and perception.


34. *The Sonnets and Ballads of Guido Cavalcanti* (Boston, 1912).


36. This is the title of Pound's essay on Villon in *The Spirit of Romance* (London, 1910), pp. 176-190. In the matter of whether Pound's translations are entitled to be considered along with his less derivative poetry, I am of the opinion of Yeats, who believed that "[they] are as much a part of his original work, as much chosen to theme, as much characterised as to style, as the
vituperation, the railing, which I had hated but which now seems a necessary balance." \textit{A Packet for Ezra Pound} (Dublin, 1929), pp. 7-8.


40. The poetry of Pound that I have considered in this chapter includes \textit{A Lume Spento} (Venice, 1908); \textit{Personae of Ezra Pound} (London, 1909), which contains most of \textit{A Lume Spento} together with new poems: \textit{Exultations of Ezra Pound} (London, 1909); and the section entitled "Cansoniere" in the first American edition, \textit{Provenese: Poems Selected from Personae, Exultations, and Cansoniere of Ezra Pound} (Boston, 1910). To avoid confusion I shall refer to the 1926 "collected" volume as \textit{Personae: the Collected Poems}.


43. For what knowledge I have of Provençal metric I am indebted to Pound's own *Spirit of Romance*, to Francis Hueffer's *The Troubadours* (London, 1878), and to Joseph Anglade's *Histoire Sommaire de la Littérature Méridionale au Moyen Age* (Paris, 1921).


46. This contraction puzzles me. It appears in "Grace Before Song," and is part of the poet's invocation to the "Lord God of Heaven":

As bright white drops upon a leaden sea
Grant so my songs to this grey folk may be:

As drops that dream and gleam and falling catch
the sun,
Evan'scent mirrors every opal one.

(Personae, p. 9)

The same form appears in *A Lung Spenta*. One would suppose the normal contraction to be *ev'nessent*. The only explanation (besides that of mere carelessness or a repeated misprint) is that Pound is punning (*evan'escent--beav'n sent*), which is justified by the context; but
Pound almost never uses this linguistic trick.

47. "A Retrospect," Literary Essays, p. 9. His remark refers specifically to a rhythm which will correspond to the precise emotion, but it is capable of more general application, I think.


54. See Note 50.


CHAPTER SIX

1. *Mater Corporata* (Boston and New York, 1901), Stanza XI. [pages not numbered]


24. Vivienne Koch, *William Carlos Williams* (Norfolk, Conn., 1950), p. 3. Miss Koch discussed this poem with Williams, who provided her with the date (1909) and place of composition. She calls it a "sonnet... with omission of the final couplet."

25. Ibid.

26. "King Arthur's Knights Have Come Again," *Outlook*, XCV (1910), 815. In the by-line Lindsay is identified as an Anti-Saloon League field worker.

27. His first published poem (apart from high-school work) appeared in the *Outlook* for 1894. Frost seems to have written a considerable body of verse between 1900 and 1910, but his bibliographers have been able to date only eight within that period. Norman Foerster's anthology, *American Poetry and Prose* (Boston, third ed., 1947), dates several others, including "Mowing" (ca. 1900), "The Tuft of Flowers" (1904), "Death of the Hired Man" (1905), and "Dust of Snow" (ca. 1906). Foerster does not, however, supply any evidence for these dates.


29. *New England Magazine*, n.s. XXXVII (1907), 204.

(1901), 1494.


33. Ibid., p. 106. Published November, 1908.

34. Eliot dates the beginning of this style at "about 1908 or 1909" ("Ezra Pound," *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse*, LXVIII [1946], 328). In the *Advocate Anthology* selection the marked difference in style between poems published January, 1909, and those published November, 1909, seems to place his adoption of a new manner within that ten-month period.


36. Ibid., p. 107.

37. Ibid., p. 109.

**CHAPTER SEVEN**


5. Eliot first used this term in "Hamlet and His Problems" (1919): "The only way of expressing emotion in the form of art is by finding an 'objective correlative'; in other words, a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that particular emotion; such that when the external facts, which must terminate in sensory experience, are given; the emotion is immediately evoked." *Selected Essays: 1917-1932* (New York, 1932), pp. 124-125. Critical terms which describe a similar kind of synthesis are F. W. Bateson's "semantic synthesis," in *English Poetry: A Critical Introduction* (London, 1950), pp. 48-56; Allen Tate's "tension" in "Tension in Poetry," *On the Limits of Poetry* (New York, 1948), pp. 75-90; and Robert Penn Warren's "impure poetry" in "Pure and Impure Poetry," *Critiques and Essays in Criticism, 1920-1948,* ed. Robert Wooster Stallman (New York, 1948), pp. 85-104.


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