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**LMD1 LECTURES**

**Lecture Five:**

**Techniques of Versification**

The world of versification is a treasure trove of techniques that poets use to weave words into music and meaning. Exploring these tools can unlock a deeper understanding and appreciation of their artistry. Here are some key techniques to consider:

**4.5.1 Sound patterns and Rhythm:**

The world of sound patterns in poetry is a symphony of sonic delights, weaving together rhyme, rhythm, and other techniques to enhance meaning and evoke emotions. Let's dive into this captivating realm and explore its diverse instruments:

* **Meter:**

 This refers to the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables in each line. Iambic pentameter (five sets of unstressed-stressed syllables) is a common choice, but many other meters exist.

Meter is therhythm of syllables in a line of verse or in a stanza of a poem. Depending on the language, this pattern may have to do with stressed and unstressed syllables, syllable weight, or number of syllables. The study of meter forms as well as the use of meter in one’s own poetry is called prosody.

* **Common forms of Meter in English:**

Many forms of meter are broken into “feet”, which is a specific group of syllables types. In English, these “feet” are combinations of two or three stressed and unstressed syllables, which are then repeated to form a line of verse. In classical Latin and classical Greek, a metrical foot contains a combination of long and short syllables. Here are the most common metrical feet in English.

* **Most common meter in English Language Poetry:**
* **Rhyme (Rime):**
* Rhyme, that mischievous sprite hiding within words, is the trickster of poetry. It takes familiar sounds and playfully repeats them, adding a layer of music and memorability to verses. It is the repetition of similar sounds at the end of lines, creating a sense of unity and musicality. Different rhyme schemes (e.g., AABB, ABAB, ABCB) add further variation.

But this playful echo isn't just about fun. Poets, like skilled musicians, use rhyme to achieve specific effects. The most common, end rhyme, places those echoing sounds at the end of lines, like in William Blake's "A Poison Tree":

I was angry with my frien**d**,

I told my wrath, my wrath did en**d**.

The repeated "en" sound creates a sense of closure, mirroring the speaker's release from anger.

Then there's

* **Internal rhyme**:

Rhyming words within a line, adding melodic complexity; where the playful echoes dance within a single line, as in Alfred, Lord Tennyson's "Blow, Bugle, Blow":

The splendour falls on castle wallsAnd snowy summits old in st**ory**:

The long light sha**kes** across the la**kes**

And the wild cataract leaps in gl**ory**.

Here, the repetition of "akes" and "ory" adds a musicality that mirrors the poem's movement and grandeur.

* **Perfect rhyme:**

When the final sounds of two or more words are identical, like "day" and "way."

* **Slant rhyme**:

Similar, but not identical sounds, like "stone" and "alone."

* **Visual rhyme:**

Words that look similar but sound different, like "love" and "dove."

* **Feminine rhymes:**

Sweet and meet: These two words share the soft "ee" sound at the end, along with an unstressed syllable before it. This rhyme is often used to create a gentle, lyrical mood.

Deep and sleep: Again, the shared "ee" sound provides the rhyming element, combined with the unstressed syllables. This rhyme can evoke a sense of peacefulness or dreaminess.

Fire and desire: Though the ending sounds aren't exactly identical, they share a similar "ir" sound that creates a pleasing resonance. This can add a subtle tension or energy to the poem.

* **Masculine rhymes:**

Cat and hat: These words share a pronounced "at" sound at the end, creating a strong, almost percussive effect. This rhyme can be used for emphasis or to add a sense of urgency.

Go and flow: The shared "ow" sound creates a robust rhyme, often used to convey movement or action.

Love and above: While the vowel sounds aren't identical, the final "v" provides a satisfying consonance that helps bind the words together. This rhyme can add a sense of elevation or transcendence.

* **Half rhymes:**

Cold and told: These words share the "old" sound but differ in the initial consonant. This creates a subtle echo without the full force of a perfect rhyme. It can be used to avoid predictability or for a more nuanced effect.

Green and mean: The "een" sound offers a partial connection here, adding a hint of rhyme without complete repetition. This can be used for subtle emphasis or to create a sense of dissonance.

Night and light: The similarity in vowel sounds offers a partial rhyme, suggesting a connection between darkness and illumination. This can be used for imagery or to highlight contrasting themes.

* **Scheme rhyme:**

It goes beyond the simple echoes of two rhyming words in different lines. It's like a meticulous blueprint, dictating how rhymes are arranged throughout a poem, creating mesmerizing sonic structures that add another layer of meaning and beauty.. Here are some popular rhyme schemes to ignite your curiosity:

**ABAB**: The reliable workhorse, this scheme alternates rhymes (line A rhymes with line B, then A rhymes with B again). Think of it as a steady beat, perfect for ballads or simple narratives.

**AABB**: More formal and stately, this scheme pairs two rhyming lines at a time (A rhymes with A, then B rhymes with B). It evokes a sense of balance and closure, often used in sonnets or formal odes.

**ABBA**: Playful and unexpected, this scheme crosses rhymes diagonally (A rhymes with B, then B rhymes with A). It creates a sense of conversational whimsy, ideal for lighter themes or lyrical explorations.

**CDCD EFEF**: Moving beyond couplets, this extended scheme groups four lines with alternating rhymes (CD rhymes with CD, then EF rhymes with EF). It offers versatility, accommodating longer poems and complex emotions.

But the world of rhyme schemes doesn't stop there! Poets weave intricate patterns like terza rima (ABA BCB CDC DED), limericks (AABBA), and even free verse with occasional playful echoes. Each scheme serves a unique purpose, shaping the poem's tone, pacing, and emotional impact.

* **Rhythm:**

Rhythm! The very heartbeat of poetry, the pulsating force that draws us in and sets our emotions dancing. It's more than just a catchy beat; it's a tapestry woven with threads of stressed and unstressed syllables, pauses, and the very music of language itself.

Think of reading a poem aloud. Do you find yourself naturally emphasizing certain words, pausing for breath, or feeling the tempo of the words quicken or slow? That's rhythm taking hold, guiding you through the emotional landscape of the poem.

* **Scansion:**

Just as a musician reads sheet music to understand a symphony's structure, scansion allows us to decode the rhythmic patterns of poetry. It involves analyzing the meter, or the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables, to reveal the poem's heartbeat.

**Here's a step-by-step guide to scansion:**

**Read the poem aloud:** Listen carefully to the natural emphasis and rhythm of your voice.

**Mark the stressed syllables:** Use a slash (/) to indicate stressed syllables, which are pronounced with more emphasis.

**Mark the unstressed syllables**: Use an x (x) to indicate unstressed syllables, which are pronounced more softly.

**Identify the metrical feet:** Each group of stressed and unstressed syllables forms a metrical foot. Common feet include:

**Iamb** (unstressed/stressed): (u /) as in Shakespeare’s poetry:  
If af/ter eve/ry tem/pest come/ such calms

**Trochee** (stressed/unstressed): (/ u) as in Edgar Allan Poe’s poem The Raven:Ah, dis/ tin ctly/ I re/ mem ber/ it was/ in the/ bleak De/ cem ber

**Anapest** (unstressed/unstressed/stressed): u u /

**Dactyl** (stressed/unstressed/unstressed): / u u

**Determine the overall meter:** Count the number of metrical feet per line to determine the poem's meter (e.g., iambic pentameter has five iambs per line).

**Note any variations:** Scansion isn't always perfect; poets often use variations like substitutions or omissions to create different effects.

**Example with Iambic Pentameter:**

Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?

(u / u / u / u / u /)

Thou art more lovely and more temperate:

(u / u / u / u / u /)

(From Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare)

**Key Points to Remember:**

Scansion is a tool for understanding rhythm, not a rigid set of rules.

Poets often play with meter to create unique effects and reflect the poem's emotions.

Reading poetry aloud is essential for experiencing its rhythm fully.

Scansion can enhance your appreciation of poetry's musicality and artistry.

**Additional Tips:**

Use a scansion guide or online tool to help you identify metrical feet and meter.

Practice scansion with various poems to develop your skills.

Consider the poem's overall tone and themes when analyzing its rhythm.

Listen to recordings of poets reading their work to hear their rhythmic choices.

* **Alliteration:** Repetition of consonant sounds at the beginning of words, creating emphasis and aural texture.
* **Assonance:** Repetition of vowel sounds within a line, adding a lyrical quality and internal rhyme.
* **Onomatopoeia:** Words that mimic sounds, enhancing imagery and sensory experience.
* **Caésure**: A pause within a line, often marked by punctuation, adding emphasis and shaping rhythm.
* **Enjambment:** When a sentence or phrase runs over into the next line, creating a sense of continuity and suspense.