Phonology and Stylistics: A Phonaesthetic Study of Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard'

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Abstract

This paper is a stylistic study of the phonological features of Thomas Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' (Elegy) such as phonaesthesia and prosody. Gray's 'Elegy' – specifically its first line – has famously been cited in conventional criticism as an example of the metre known as iambic pentameter. But beyond that and perhaps because of the sheer size of the poem, which consists of 32 quatrains, very little in-depth work has been done particularly on its phonaesthetic structure which makes it such an outstanding and memorable poem. This research therefore undertakes a detailed investigation of all the phonaesthetic devices which identify the poem as a happy and celebratory elegy. Employing metrical phonological theories from Stallworthy, Wales, Katamba, Leech, Roach and Boulton, the study appraises all the suprasegmental features of poetry such as syllabification, metre, rhyme, elision, onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance and consonance, and exemplifies the ways in which these devices support the meaning of the poem. The paper concludes that, based on a preponderance of these 'happy' phonological devices which lend great support to its sense, Gray's 'Elegy' is indeed not a poem of mourning as such, but a posthumous 'musical' contemplation of the virtues of simplicity and hardwork.

Keywords: Phonaesthesia, Prosody, Metre, Elision, Suprasegmental, Onomatopoeia

Introduction

1. Phonology, Stylistics and Poetry

Phonology is the study of the organization and patterning of sounds in particular languages. Whereas phonetics is the technical study of the concrete characteristics of human sounds in terms of how they are produced (articulatory phonetics), transmitted (acoustic phonetics), and perceived (auditory phonetics), phonology concerns itself with how these sounds function in a systemic way in a particular language. Jones (2006) states that the basic activities of phonology are:

> phonemic analysis in which the objective is to establish what the phonemes are and arrive at the 'phonemic inventory' of the language…(and) the study of stress, rhythm and intonation.…The way in which sounds combine in a language is studied in 'phonotactics' and in the analysis of syllable structure (p.388).

However, despite this traditional dichotomy between phonetics and phonology, a good many phonologists believe that the overlap in their areas of concern demand that both must be studied together for best results. Cruttenden (1994, p.6) for instance, suggests that:

> besides being concerned with the sounds of a language, both phonetics and phonology must also describe the combinatory possibilities of the sounds (the phonotactics or syllable structure) and   the prosody of the language, that is, how features of pitch, loudness, and length work to produce accent, rhythm and intonation.

In the opinion of Katamba (1993, p.1):

> Phonology is the branch of linguistics which investigates the ways in which sounds are used systematically in different languages to form words and utterances. In order to understand phonology, one must have a grasp of the basic

> concept of phonetics, the study of the inventory of all speech sounds which humans are capable of producing.

And also Roach (2009, p.35) validates this relationship in the following way:

> When we talk about how phonemes function in language, and the relationships among the different phonemes – when, in other words, we study the abstract side of the sounds of language, we are studying a related but different subject that we call phonology. Only by studying both the phonetics and the phonology of English is it possible to acquire a full understanding of the use of sounds in English speech.

The importance of phonetics and phonology in the investigation of the verbal expressiveness of language is thus firmly established, and so the use of the term 'phonology' in this study implies both as much as possible. Phonology here is also seen as a level of language following from Wales (2011, p.318) who describes it as 'the expression or realization of language in its spoken form'.

When a literary text is studied for its phonological features – the various characteristic patterning of metrical, as well as symbolic, possibilities of sounds – this is invariably the subject matter of stylistics. Stylistics is the study of the language of literature which employs the various tools of linguistic analysis. It is a field of empirical enquiry in which insights and techniques of linguistic theory are used to analyse literary texts. Wynne (2005, p.1) observes:

> A typical way to do **stylistics** is to apply the systems of categorization and analysis of linguistic science to **poems** and prose, using theories relating to, for example, **phonetics**, syntax and semantics.

Doing stylistics in this sense therefore involves the exploration of language, specifically creativity in language use. It enriches our ways of thinking about language, and this in turn offers a substantial purchase on our understanding of literary texts. As observed by Wynne above, there is a remarkable three-way relationship among phonology, stylistics and poetry. The fact that literature is essentially composed of written language might seem to suggest that it is not especially suited to phonological exploration, but sound patterning and significance are crucial in any literary discourse in general and poetry in particular. What then is poetry?

Poetry is the genre which studies the composition of poems. A poem is a written composition for performance by the human voice. It is often written in verse stanzas, characterized by concentrated language in which words are chosen for their sound and suggestive power as well as for their sense, and involves metre, rhyme and figures of speech. Stallworthy (1997, p.1103) goes as far as relating the exploration of verse, especially its phonological sequence, to the appreciation of music, and posits as follows:

> The most satisfying reading of a poem involves a simultaneous engagement of eye, and ear: the eye attentive not only to the meaning of words, but to their grouping and spacing as lines on a page; the ear attuned to the grouping and spacing of sounds. The more one understands of musical notation and the principles of music composition, the more one will understand and appreciate a composer's score. Similarly, the more one understands of versification, the more one is likely to understand and appreciate poetry and, in particular, the intimate relationship between its form and its content.

The analogy with musical composition is particularly apt for a poem like Gray's 'Elegy' which seems to possess the features of a composer's score. In poetic language, the most obvious instances of phonological foregrounding occur in the cohesive patterns of exploitation and repetition of sound devices in phonaesthesia such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, metre and rhyme. Phonological deviation common in poetry also includes elision of sounds. A good many scholars claim that the language of poetry is, or ought to be, different from ordinary language while others disagree. For instance, Thomas Gray who, like the other Augustans before him, represents the former school of thought, had observed in a letter to Richard West in 1742 that 'the language of the age is never the language of poetry' while more than a century later, Gerald Manley Hopkins, who represents the latter group, also in a letter to Robert Bridges in 1879 observed that poetic language 'should be the current language heightened, to any degree heightened and unlike itself, but not…an obsolete one' (Leech, 1969, p.8).

Disputes such as the above exemplify the peculiarity and originality of poetic language. Leech himself speaks of this and observes that 'there is no other variety of language in which originality is so prized and dogged orthodoxy so despised', suggesting that 'poetry is the mode of composition which is creative *par excellence'* and in which 'rules

are made   only to be broken' (Leech, 1969, p.12). This is also corroborated by Wales (2011, p.323) when she remarks that 'poetic language is popularly regarded as the most creative of discourses, original in its ideas and inventive in its forms,' and goes on to add that 'critics as diverse as Samuel Johnson, William Wordsworth and T. S. Eliot argued for the suitability of poetry for themes universal and permanent; and the medium also best suited for intense emotion'(p.324). And then she concludes somewhat sweepingly that 'the function of poetic language was to arouse the feelings of its readers or listeners in a way that scientific language, mainly referential, did not'(p.324).

As observed, the specific phonological components of verse which are of interest to stylistics revolve around the suprasegmental and phonotactic processes of rhythm, metre, rhyme, onomatopoeia, alliteration and assonance. To understand these devices of sound properly, it is necessary first and foremost to explain in detail the basic phonological unit known as the syllable.

2. The English Syllable

The English syllable structure consists of phonetic and phonological constituents strictly speaking. But Cruttenden (1994, p.49) defines it in terms of the 'sonority hierarchy' in which all the phonemes are arranged according to their 'carrying power', beginning with the open vowels as the most sonorous at the top of the scale and ending with the plosives and flaps as the least sonorous at the bottom. Between these, from top to bottom, are close vowels, laterals, nasals, approximants, trills, fricatives and affricates. Thus, for instance, a vowel like /æ/ has more carrying power than a consonant like /z/, which in turn has more carrying power than /b/. According to Ashby and Maidment (2005, p.7), the syllable is 'the shortest stretch of speech that a speaker can actually pronounce in a fairly natural way' and it is 'like one pulse of speech.' And Mathews (2007, p.394) defines it as a 'phonological unit consisting of a vowel or other unit that can be produced in isolation either alone or accompanied by one or more less sonorous units'.

Traditionally however, a phonetic syllable consists of a mandatory vowel phoneme technically referred to as the **nucleus (**or **peak).** The nucleus may be preceded by one or more consonant phonemes technically known as **onset**, and may be followed by one or more consonant phonemes technically called **coda.** The nucleus and coda together form a unit technically called the **rhyme.** This can be represented in the form of a diagram:
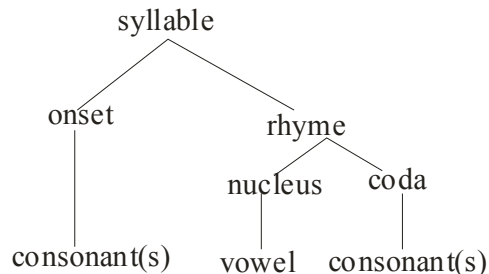
A monosyllabic word such as *not*, for instance, consists of the following:
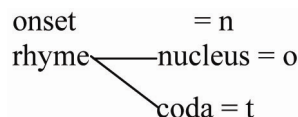
A syllable which consists of only the nucleus such as the words *are* /ɑː/, *or* /ɔː/ and *owe* /əʊ/ is referred to as a minimum syllable whereas a syllable with an onset but no coda as in the words *key* /kiː/ and *bar* /bɑː/ is described as an open syllable, and the one which ends with a coda such as in *not* /nɒt/ and *ease* /iːz/ is known as a closed syllable. When both onset and coda are present, we speak phonetically of a complete syllable. These terms – onset, nucleus, rhyme and coda – can be very useful in describing not just the distribution of phonemes in the syllable, but also, as will be seen, their patterning characteristics in prosody in poetry.

Phonologically however, the English syllable is defined according to the combinatory possibilities of English phonemes in syllable-initial (onset) and syllable-final (coda) positions. In terms of the grouping of consonants called clustering, the rules of the language indicate that the minimum number of onsets is zero whereas the maximum is three. Similarly, coda clustering permits a minimum of zero and a maximum of four consonants. This may be summed up in terms of a template:

$$CO^3 \, VCO^4 \text{ (phonetic)}$$

CCCVCCCC (phonological)

Common examples of onset clustering include:

<p align="center">stop /st-/, bread /br-/, straw /str-/</p>

And those for the coda include:

<p align="center">ask /-sk/, jumps /-mps/, texts /-ksts/</p>

It should be noted here that in English, the affricates /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ do not occur in onset clusters, and no consonant ever clusters with itself.

The permissible distribution of English phonemes within the syllable means that all consonants except the velar nasal /ŋ/ can occur as onset phonemes. On the other hand, all consonants, except the glottal fricative /h/, the post alveolar /r/, palatal /j/ and labio-velar /w/ approximants, can occur as coda phonemes. The 19 consonant phonemes which occur as onset and coda are: / p b t d k g f v s z θ ð tʃ dʒ ʃ ʒ j m n/ . The other five occur only as follows:

/ŋ/ = tongue /tʌŋ/, wrong/rɒŋ/, sink/sɪŋk/ (coda only)

/h/ = help/help/, house/haʊs/ (onset only)

/r/ = run/rʌn/, free/friː/ (onset only)

/j/ = yes/jes/, stew/stjuː/ (onset only)

/w/ = west/west/, swim/swɪm/ (onset only)

Analysing the structure of the English syllable in this way is, as will be seen presently, certainly useful in explaining not just the metrical and rhyming structure of the syllables in English poetry but also their semantic significance which is also referred to as phonaesthesia.

3. Phonaesthesia

Phonaesthesia is the study of the expressiveness of sounds, especially those sounds which are felt to echo their meanings. It is a kind of sustained or extended onomatopoeia. Leech (1969, p.98) calls it sound symbolism and observes that in it, the sound 'enacts the sense rather than merely [echoing] it'. Mathews (2007, p.374) also refers to it as sound symbolism and describes it as:

> the use of specific sounds or features of sounds in a partly systematic relation to meanings or categories of meaning. Generally taken to include: 1. The use of forms traditionally called onomatopoeic….2. Partial resemblances in form among words whose meanings are similar: e.g. among *slip,* or *slither,* all with initial /sl/. In the second case the correspondence may be partly explicable by the nature of the sounds and meanings involved: e.g. the least sonorous vowel, /i/, is often associated, in the vocabulary and in the minds of speakers, with concepts of smallness.

But Mikov (2003, p.97) points out that the term 'sound symbolism' is somewhat inaccurate because according to her 'the connection between sound (or phoneme) and meaning is more motivated, less arbitary, than with symbolism proper'. The term 'phonaesthemes' coined by Firth (1957) refers to the sound clusters themselves which even though not discrete or independent semantic units are analogous to morphemes in the sense of forming phonaesthetic relationship with recurring lexical meanings (Wales, 2011). For instance, the onset cluster /fl-/ in words like:

<p align="center">flail, flap, flare, flash, flush, flick, fling, flop and flounce</p>

suggests sudden movement, while the nucleus and coda (rhyme) /æʃ/   in the words:

<p align="center">bash, crash, dash, flash, smash and thrash</p>

represent violent impact or abrupt movement. Interest in phonaesthesia dates back to Plato's *Cratylus* in which there is a discussion of the whole question of the relationship between naming and the object.

For obvious reasons, the whole idea of the correspondence between sound and sense in poetry in this study is extended beyond onomatopoeia to include metre, rhyme, alliteration, assonance and consonance. It has been noted that metre, for instance, can be used mimetically to suggest sluggish movement, galloping, jubilation and so on. The paper thus turns its attention to the major theories and postulations concerning rhythm and metre.

4. Rhythm and Metre

The terms *rhythm* and *metre* are often employed in the same context. Rhythm is a flow, movement, procedure and so on characterized by basically regular recurrence of elements or features such as beat or accent in alternation with opposite or different elements or features. According to Gimson (1972 p.260) 'rhythm is primarily a periodicity, a deliberate arrangement of speech into regular occurring units'. Mikov (2003, p.97) says that it can be seen as 'the main factor that brings order into an utterance by means of its demand for oppositions that alternate: long, short, stressed, unstressed, high, low, etc contrasting segments of speech'.   She goes on to add that 'the phenomenon of rhythm in language is thus considered as an efficient phonetic expressive means which serves to foreground particular features of the utterance'.

On her part, Wales (2011, pp.372-373) observes that:

> in phonetics and prosody, rhythm is generally described as the perceptual pattern of accented or stressed and unaccented or unstressed syllables in a language… rhythm is fairly regular, the stressed syllables recurring at roughly equal intervals.

Boulton (1982) makes a distinction between rhythm and metre by stating as follows:

> Both words, when used concerning English poetry, refer to the pattern of stresses. Rhythm… meaning every possible aspect of this, metre meaning the symmetrical, repetitive pattern of stresses. Rhythm thus includes metre but metre is a relatively small part of rhythm (p.17).

And in his own distinction between not just rhythm and metre but also between prose rhythm and poetic rhythm, Leech (2008) argues that while:

> *Rhythm* has been called (rather unnecessarily) 'prose rhythm', to indicate that it is the realization of metre in actual language… *metre* has been called the 'metrical set' – ie the pattern of mathematical regularity that underlies the rhythm.

Leech adds that:

> metre is mathematical and rhythm is linguistic. Metre is the ideal pattern (say iambic pentameter) which is assumed by poetic convention; rhythm is the actual sequence(s) of stressed and unstressed syllables which the English language insists on (pp.71-72).

For Simpson (2004, p.15):

> metre is, most simply put, an organised pattern of strong and weak syllables, [while] that repetition, into a regular phrasing across a line of verse, is what makes *rhythm*. Rhythm is therefore a patterned movement of pulses in time which is defined both by periodicity (it occurs at regular time intervals) and repetition (the same pulses occur again and again).

And according to Ashby and Maidment (2005, p.161):

> Rhythm can be defined as the pattern of occurrence in time of relatively 'strong' and relatively 'weak' events. In a language like English, the strong events are stressed syllables and the weak events are the unstressed ones. There is a tendency, and perhaps it is no more than that, for stressed syllables to occur at roughly equal intervals in English.

It is metre, as well as rhythm and rhyme, which distinguishes poetry most markedly from prose, and so any phonological discussion of English poetry needs to pay in-depth attention to its procedure.

Poetry constantly demonstrates tension between the regularity inherent in verse and the 'irregularity' of ordinary or prosaic language. The idea of a regular periodic beat underlies any talk of rhythm, and this is why English rhythm is described as stress-timed, meaning that it is based on a roughly equal lapse of time between the stressed syllables. The stress-timed segments are referred to by Leech (1969) as **measures**. In English metre, a number of unstressed syllables, varying from nil to about four, can occur between one stressed syllable and the next, and the duration of any particular syllable depends essentially on the number of other syllables in the same measure. Since the metre of

poetry is the basic pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables, stress itself is produced by putting more force of breath to a particular syllable thus making it more prominent, louder and longer than others. A stressed syllable therefore is longer and louder than its neighbours and may be marked by some pitch movement or new level in pitch.

Stress timing, which is a theory whereby an equal amount of time is taken between each two stressed syllables and between the last stressed syllable and the end of the utterance, can be illustrated in the following sentences:

John can't have for.got.ten Sal.ly's birth.day

They could.n't have cho.sen a bet.ter time for their ho.li.day

in which the duration between the stressed syllables represented by the slant strokes are equal regardless of the number of syllables between them.

In English poetry, there are four metrical systems. These are the **accentual**, the **accentual-syllabic**, the **syllabic** and the **quantitative**. The accentual metre, also referred to as the strong stress metre, is the oldest. It employs a line divided in two by a heavy caesura, each half dominated by the two strongly stressed syllables. Caedmon's 'Hymn' illustrates this type of metre. The lines here are organized by stress and by alliteration in such a way that one or both stressed syllables in the first half-line alliterate with the first stressed syllable in the second half line.

The accentual-syllabic metre provides the metrical structure for the majority of the new poetry to emerge in the fourteenth century. It is the metre of choice for the great poems of English literature including Gray's 'Elegy'. Its basic unit is the foot which is a combination of two or three stressed and/or unstressed syllables. The study will return to this presently in detail. The third type of metrical system is the syllabic metre, and it measures only the number of syllables in a line without regard to their stress. Featuring indiscriminate, irregular stress pattern, poems with this kind of metrical structure tend to be syllabic, for example Marianne Moore's 'Poetry' which consists of 19 syllables in the first line of each stanza, 22 in the second, 11 in the third (except the third stanza which has 7), 5 in the fourth, 8 in the fifth and 13 in the sixth. Poetry in Romance languages such as French, Italian and even in Japanese tends to be syllabic in construction.

This study is concerned with the second type of metrical system, the accentual-syllabic metre. In English poetry, traditional scansion recognizes eight types of accentual-syllabic metre, but out of these only four appear to be the most common. The eight types of metre consist of two examples each of rising metre (the iamb and the anapaest), falling metre (the trochee and the dactyl), flat or level metre (the spondee and the pyrrhic) and the very rare metre (the amphibrach and the amphimacer/cretic). In scansion, unstressed syllables are often represented by a breve (˘) or a small cross (x) while the stressed syllable may be represented by a stroke (‿) or a macron (-). This study employs the breve and the stroke.

4.1 The Iamb (adjective = iambic) ˘ ‿; dum-dee; da-DA

This metrical foot consists of two syllables beginning with an unstressed syllable and ending in a stressed syllable, that is, every **even** syllable is strong stressed beginning with the second syllable in a line of poetry. Examples include:

a)   re.ceive (re-CEIVE)

b)   It was|the best|of times | it was | the worst | of times

c)   That time | of year | thou may'st | in me | behold

d)   I sing | of brooks | of blos | soms birds | and bowers

The iambic metre is commonly found in all the plays of Shakespeare, all heroic couplets, all sonnets and it is the basis of many well-known English verse forms such as Milton's *Paradise Lost,* Spenser's *The Faerie Queene* and of course Gray's 'Elegy'.

Phonaesthetically, the iamb is often described as firm and flat and comes down heavily like the word 'that'. It is preferred for serious subjects of sometimes paradoxical kind including matters of love, romance, mortality and the celebration of life's virtues. Stallworthy (1997, p. 1106) notes that it 'has a certain gravity, making it a natural choice for poems on solemn subjects'.

4.2 The Trochee (adjective = trochaic) ‿ ˘; dee-dum; DA –da

The trochee consists of two syllables in which a stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable, that is, every odd syllable starting with the first syllable of a line is stressed. For example:

a)   cŏl. oŭr (COL-our)

b)   Lŏndŏn |brĭdge ĭs |făl`lĭng |dŏwn

c)   Jŏe aňd|Sandy̌| left tŏ| day fŏr | Dallǎs

d)   Thĕre thĕy | are my̌| fif ty̌|men aňd | womĕn

Phonaesthetically, trochees 'dance very lightly, sparkle, froth, bubble brightly and fall'. This metre has a lighter, quicker, more buoyant movement. In knitting, especially involving 'knit one, purl one', it does matter whether it begins with the row with a knit or purl stitch. This is analogous to the trochaic metre. The trochaic metre is found in Milton's 'L'Allegro' and Blake's 'Introduction' to *Songs of Innocence.*

4.3 The Anapaest (adjective = anapaestic) ˘ ˘ ´; dum-dum-dee; da-da DA
A foot of three syllables, the trochee begins with two unstressed syllables and ends in a stressed syllable, that is, a line of poetry in which every third syllable is strong stressed.

Examples are:

a)   ŭn.dĕr. stand (un-der-STAND)

b)   Ĭ wŏke up| oň ă boat

c)   Thĕ Ăs sy̌|riăn cǎme down | lĭke ă wolf | oň thĕ fold

d)   Bŭt Ĭ hate |tŏ bĕ cheat|ĕd aňd ne|vĕr wĭll buy

Phonaesthetically, the anapaestic metre gives a feeling of urgent movement.

4.4 The Dactyl (adjective = dactylic) ´ ˘ ˘ ; dee-dum-dum; DA-da-da

The dactyl consists of three syllables in which a stressed syllable falls into two consecutive unstressed syllables; that is, a line in which the first, the fourth, the seventh, the tenth and so on receive the strong stresses. Examples include:

a)   for. tŭ. năte (FOR-tu-nate)

b)   Tĭmŏthy̌| Garrĭsŏn | wantĕd tŏ | sĭmplĭfy

c)   Take hĕr ŭp | tendĕrly̌ | lĭft hĕr wĭth |care

d)   Eve wĭth hĕr|baskĕt wăs | deep ĭn thĕ | bells aňd grass

Phonaesthetically, the dactyl is similar to the anapaest in that it has a naturally energetic movement, making it suitable for poems with vigorous subjects, though not these only. It is famously found in Hardy's 'The Voice'.

The remaining types of accentual-syllabic metre are the rare Spondee and Pyrrhic as well as the very rare Amphibrach and Amphimacer/Cretic metres.

4.5 The Spondee (adjective = spondaic) ´ ´ ; dee-dee; DA-DA

This refers to a metrical foot of two successive syllables with approximately, equal strong stresses as in the following:

a)   heart break

b)   draw back

c)   Tell Joan right now

The spondaic metre can be found in Arnold's 'Dover Beach' and Davies' 'School's Out'.

4.6 The Pyrrhic (adjective = pyrrhic) ˘ ˘ ; dum-dum; da-da

The pyrrhic foot consists of two successive unstressed or lightly stressed syllables. Although quite rare in English

poetry, yet when it occurs as in the second foot of the following line from Arnold's 'Dover Beach':

Ŏf peb|lĕs whĭch | thĕ wáves | dráw báck | aňd flíng

it seems to mimic the rattle of light pebbles which are slowly drawn by the heavy wave.

4.7 The Amphibrach (adjective = amphibrachic) ˘ ́˘; dum-dee-dum; da-DA-da.

In the amphibrach, a stressed syllable occurs between two unstressed syllables, and this is usually found in limericks.

4.8 The Amphimacer/Cretic ́˘ ́; dee-dum-dee; DA-da-DA.

Like the amphibrach, the amphimacer is very rare. It consists of an unstressed syllable between two stressed syllables.

In addition to these Latin names for the types of metre in English poetry, there are also names for a variety of line lengths from which a poet can choose. They are as follows:

monometer	=	one foot
dimeter	=	two feet
trimeter	=	three feet
tetrameter	=	four feet
pentameter	=	five feet
hexameter	=	six feet
heptameter/septenarius	=	seven feet (rare)
octameter	=	eight feet (very rare)

5. Variation, Deviation and Counterpoint

Although rhythm and metre in English verse thrive on regularity of patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables, this is not always the case. Indeed, strict regularity in the sense of each foot being exactly like the next and each line being exactly like the next, would be, as Boulton (1982) suggests, not a merit but a defect in poetry. According to her 'a series of completely "regular" lines would be, not a proof of poetic skill, but unbearably monotonous'(p.30). Thus, variation in an otherwise regular metre often referred to as counterpoint is a perfectly legitimate feature of prosody. The basic pattern is never found for long without variations.

The commonest instances of variation occur in iambic verse. This is sometimes seen in the inversion of the order of the stresses in the first group. For instance, in one of the examples for the iambic metre above:

That time|of year| thou may'st| in me|behold

it is quite possible to have a reversal of the first foot so that the stress falls on the word 'that' rather than the second word 'time' giving us a trochaic foot at the beginning of a basic iambic metre. Similarly in the line:

The Assy|rian came down| like a wolf| on the fold

we can have a stress on the word 'came' thus reversing the second foot from an anapaest to the rare amphibrach as follows:

|rĭan cáme dŏwn|

while the line:

Take her up|tenderly|lift her with| care

which we have said is a dactyl of three feet ends with an extra syllable 'care', making it **hypermetric**. The effect adds to the feeling of gentle regret. In prosody, a line which contains one or more extra syllables or even a foot is a **hypermeter** whereas a line of verse which has an incomplete final foot or a syllable short is called **catalectic**. The line:

Eve with her| basket was | deep in the | bells and grass

which will more often than not receive the stress on the last syllable 'grass' also, can give us a rare amphimacer rather than a complete dactylic metre. We note that the dactylic metre in English generally has an incomplete foot

because the number of dactylic words in English is small and also the constraints of rhyme reduces the length of the line (Boulton, 1982).

Variation in metre has given rise to the theory of equivalence propounded by George Saintsbury, which is also sometimes referred to as the theory of substitution. According to this theory, one kind of foot may be substituted for another equivalent foot. For instance, an iambic foot may be replaced somewhere in a line by a trochaic or anapaestic foot, a trochaic foot may be replaced by a dactyl and so on, but this must not occur so often as to distort the basic metre. As Saintsbury admits, the experience of the human ear, rather than a fixed rule, dictates the acceptability of substitution in a given line (Boulton, 1982). Thus, for instance, what ordinarily would be seen above as inverted instances of iambic foot, anapaestic foot and dactylic foot would be called a substituted equivalent trochee, amphibrach and amphimacer respectively.

Another type of phonological deviation associated with metre is the concept of elision. This involves the deletion of whole syllables to fit into the metrical concerns of each line of verse. The three common instances of metrical elision are **aphesis**, **syncope** and **apocope**. Aphesis is the omission of the initial syllable of a word, which occurs gradually over a period. It is related to the less common term **aphaeresis**, which applies to the special (nonce) loss. Examples include:

<center>'gainst (against), 'twixt (betwixt), 'tis (it is)</center>

Syncope involves the omission of medial sounds such that bisyllabic words become monosyllabic, for example;

<center>o'er (over), e'er (ever), ne'er (never)</center>

The omission of the final syllable in a word in a line of verse is referred to as apocope, and the most common example is the word *oft* which usually replaces the word *often* for purposes of metre. The normal practice is for the syllables so elided, especially in aphesis and syncope, to be replaced with an apostrophe.

6. Rhyme

Rhyme is an important phonological component of English verse. It is the repetition of the arrangement of the nucleus (vowel) and coda (final consonant) at the ends of two or more lines of verse. H. W. Fowler's definition in *The Concise Oxford Dictionary* says that it is 'the identity of sounds between words or verse lines extending from the end to the last fully accented vowel and not farther' (Leech, 1969, p.92; Boulton, 1982, p.45). Stallworthy (1997) defines it as 'the concurrence in two or more lines, of the last stressed vowel of all speech sounds' and adds that 'it is closely associated with English poetry'(p.1111).   To Wales (2011) it is 'a kind of phonetic echo found in verse: more precisely, a phonemic matching' (p.371), and, in the words of Mikov (2003), 'the repetition of identical or similar sound combinations of words' (p.96).

In great poems such as Gray's 'Elegy', rhyme is not just another decorative phonological feature. It has been, and continues to be, a very crucial element in the music of such verse, reinforcing, perhaps, more than other features, the memorable quality of poetry. Phonaesthetically, rhyme functions by helping poets – through associating one rhyme word with another – introduce a remote constellation of associations which may corroborate, question or even sometimes contradict the literal meaning of words. Often, the relationship of meanings between words is underscored by the relationship of rhyme. Let us consider the main types of rhyme.

6.1 Masculine (*or full*) rhyme refers to the identity between the nucleus and coda of stressed monosyllabic words at the end of two or more lines of poetry, for example: *day/play/say*. This rhyme occurs frequently in iambic verse or as catalectic variations in trochaic verse.

6.2 Feminine rhyme often consists of two (or more) syllables in which a stressed syllable is followed by an unstressed syllable. For example: *Horner/corner, chiming/rhyming.* Feminine rhymes are common in trochaic verse, or as a variation (a hypermetric final foot) in iambic verse. Some feminine rhymes involve pairs in which a single word rhymes with a phrase thereby highlighting the unstressed words, for example: *pudding/mud in,* intel*lectual*/hen-*pecked you all*, per*suaded*/*they did*.

6.3 Pararhyme, a term coined by Edmund Blunden to describe Owen's rhyming style in 'Strange Meeting,' involves syllables or words with a different nucleus but similar or identical onsets and coda. It is also called **apophony**, **slant rhyme** or consonance, for example: *trod/trade, pest/past*. It may be **half rhyme** or **off rhyme** which involves the repetition of the coda with variation in the preceding nucleus, for example: *pest/last.*

6.4 Reverse rhyme refers to the identity between the onset and nucleus of two or more stressed syllables, for example: *cash/carry*, *send/sell*, *quelled/quenched*.

6.5 Eye rhyme occurs in words whose endings are spelt alike, and in most instances were pronounced alike, but have in the course of time acquired a different pronunciation. This type of rhyme particularly corresponds with the imperfections of modern life. Examples include: *bough*[bɑʊ]/*cough*[kɒf], *great*[greɪt]/*meat*[miːt], *find*[fɑɪnd] /*wind* [wɪnd], *love* [lʌv]/*prove* [pruːv].

6.6 Antisthecon involves deliberate distortion of rhymes often for comic effect, for example: *Durrham/worrum*.

6.7 Unaccented rhyme, also known as light rhyme, is one in which a stressed syllable word rhymes with an unstressed syllable word, for example: *unsure/measure*.

6.8 Apocopated rhyme occurs when one of the rhyming syllables is followed by an extra syllable as in: *wordless/birds*.

6.9 Broken rhyme, in which a word is split to run on to the next line, is quite rare but not impossible. It is found in:

> Leaving him to buy his box of oint-
>
> Ment, tea and seedlings – which were now the point.
>
> -Christopher Filling
>
> I caught this morning morning's minion king-
>
> Dom of daylight's dauphin, dapple-dawn... in his riding.
>
> -Gerard Manley Hopkins

6.10 Mosaic rhyme, also called compound rhyme, is a type of rhyme in which one word rhymes with a combination of words, for example: *upon her/ honour/won her*, *bottom/forget em/shot him*.

6.11 Synthetic rhyme occurs commonly in comic verse and thrives on the distortion of the natural stress or pronunciation of some of the rhyming words, for example: *men/N, fe-ar/we are*.

In addition to these main types of rhyme, there are also the basic stanzaic forms which sometimes determine rhyme scheme. These include **heroic couplet** (aa, bb, cc, dd etc); **alternate** or **cross** rhyme/**heroic quatrain** (abab cdcd etc); **terza rima**/triple rhyme (linked tercet in which the second line of each stanza rhymes with the first and third lines of the next, ie aba, bcb, cdc, ded etc); **rhyme royal** (introduced by Chaucer consisting of seven stanzas ie ababbcc); **otavia rima** (eight iambic pentameter lines introduced by Sir Thomas Wyatt, ie abababcc); **Spenserian stanza** (which has nine lines with the first eight lines being iambic pentameter while the last line is an Alexandrine ie ababbcbcc); and the **sonnet** (which consists of 14 lines with the Italian version rhyming one octave and one sestet, ie abba abba cde cde while the English version rhymes three quatrains and one couplet, ie abab cdcd efef gg, for the Shakespearean variant, and abab bcbc eded ee for the Spenserian variant).

7. Onomatopoeia

Onomatopoeia or echoism refers to the tendency of words to echo their meanings by their actual sounds such as in expressions like *buzz, fizz, crash, bang, thump, quack, giggle, sizzle, hiss, sneeze, thud, snort, grunt* and *effervescence*. Derived from Greek, meaning 'name making', it is particularly central to any discussions of phonaesthesia in poetry. As Boulton (1982) observes:

> The fact that the most suitable word is often also the onomatopoeically effective
> word depends on aspects of language so primitive that we are seldom conscious
> of them while we are using the words (p.63).

Onomatopoeia is attractive not only by the accuracy with which it conjures the sound images of the things described, but also by lulling users of the language into a trance in a kind of incantation. It comes alive particularly in poems which are read aloud. Words used onomatopoeically have the following phonaesthetic effects depending on the preponderance of the phonemes.

First and foremost, long vowels and diphthongs generally sound more peaceful and more solemn than short vowels, which have a general tendency towards quick movement, agitation or triviality. Secondly, the consonant phonemes are distributed phonaesthetically as follows:

1. /b,p/ are explosive; represent quickness, movement, triviality and scorn.

2. /m,n, ŋ/ symbolize various effects of humming, singing, music and occasionally sinister.

3. /l/ suggests liquids in motion, streams, water, rest, peace, luxury or voluptuousness.

4. /k, g, tʃ, kw, st, ts/ symbolize harshness, violence, cruelty, discomfort, noise or conflict.

5.   /s,∫/ are hissing sounds which are also soft and smooth, soothing words.

6.   /z/ is used in contexts of harshness.

7.   /f, v, w/ suggest wind, wings as well as light and easy movement.

8.   /t,d/ similar to /k,ɡ/ but less emphatic; employed to describe brief activity.

9.   /r/ as a post alveolar approximant, depends more on nearby sounds but is generally found in contexts of movement and noise.

10.   /θ, ð/ tend to be quiet and soothing.

Generally speaking, a predominance of vowels in any verse tends to suggest something slow, peaceful, pleasant, while a general clatter of crowded consonants suggests greater speed, excitement or harshness (Boulton, 1982, p.64).

8. Alliteration, Consonance and Assonance

Like rhyme, these three phonological schemes thrive on the similarity of specific phonemic segments in a line of poetry, and are often classed as kinds of half rhyme.   Whereas alliteration involves a similarity in only the onsets of stressed syllables, and while consonance refers to the identity of the coda (and sometimes onsets and codas), assonance occurs in the repetition of the nucleus flanked by different onsets and codas.   Taken together as phonaesthetic devices then, all three impart melodic effects to an utterance through the identity between one whole syllable and another in a line of verse. The repetition of onset (alliteration) occurs in:

> ... with *b*eaded *b*ubbles winking at the *b*rim / b/

> … and lift myself from the *d*epths of *d*eep *d*espair /d/

The identity of coda – sometimes onset and coda – (consonance) is seen in:

> The *s*ailor *s*ings of rope*s* and thing*s*

> In ship*s* upon the *s*ea*s* /s,z/

and the similarity in the nucleus (assonance) is found in:

> Till the sh*i*ning sc*y*thes went far and w*i*de

> And cut it down to dr*y* /ɑɪ/

All these instances of partial or half rhyme are employed in verse as aspects of sound patterning as well as cohesion. The phonaesthetic principles which govern them are similar to those associated with onomatopoeia in the preceding section. It should be noted also that the three schemes –alliteration, consonance and assonance – are sometimes used interchangeably with some overlapping in their segment categorization. Together with rhyme and onomatopoeia, they constitute an effective illustration of the expressiveness of the phonemes of the English syllable in poetry, and this is summarized as follows:

> nucleus and coda only = end rhyme (full rhyme)
>
> onset only   =   alliteration
>
> nucleus (sometimes onset and coda) only = assonance ⎤
>   ⎥ (half rhyme)
> coda (sometimes onset and coda) only = consonance ⎦
>
> onset, rhyme and semantics = onomatopoeia

In the following sections, the paper exemplifies these theories and principles in Gray's 'Elegy'.

9. The Phonaesthetics of the Poem

Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' was published in 1751 in the late classical period, midway between the age of Pope and that of Wordsworth. The poem is an elegy only in name but not in form, which is more like that of contemporary odes. But it does embody a meditation on death and remembrance after death. It mourns all those who lived and died quietly and never had the chance to demonstrate their greatness, pondering their rustic lives as they lie buried in the churchyard. It begins with a contemplation of the close of day (curfew), then proceeds to eulogize latent virtues of the dead and then concludes with an exhortation about the necessity for commemorating the dead, with a practical demonstration of this in the final three-stanza epitaph, which has the poet himself as the subject.

The poem lacks the traditional features of the elegy such as an invocation, mourners, flowers and shepherds. It does

not emphasize loss in the conventional sense. Rather, it celebrates life's virtues of simplicity, homeliness and hardwork seen post mortem. It is in that sense a 'happy' but contemplative elegy as attested to by the following lines:

> Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
>
> Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
>
> Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
>
> Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre.

And regarding the latent virtues of the dead rustics, Gray says:

> Full many a gem of purest ray serene
>
> The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear:
>
> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
>
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Although Samuel Johnson was generally unimpressed by Gray as a man and a poet, he was nevertheless moved enough by this poem to observe that it 'abounds with images which find a mirror in every mind, and with sentiments to which every bosom returns an echo' (Thwaite, 1984, p.107). The melodic echo referred to by Dr. Johnson here is enriched not just by the often cited imperial iambic pentameter but also by the harmony of its plethora of other phonological features such as metrical variation, rhyme, onomatopoeia, alliteration, consonance and assonance. Let us exemplify these contentions with relevant lines of the poem.

9.1 Metre

The basic metrical pattern of this poem is the iambic pentameter but in reality it is dominated by significant variations and counterpoint. The poem consists of 32 heroic quatrains (128 lines) with the last three quatrains being the epitaph. The first three lines of the first quatrain are firmly iambic pentameter thus:

1. The Cur|few | tolls | the knell |of part|ing day

2. The low |ing herd | wind slow|ly o'er | the lea

3. The plow | man home|ward plods| his wea|ry way

This continues faithfully in the other majestic lines such as:

6. And all| the air|a sol| emn still|ness holds

7. Save where| the bee| tle wheels | his dron|ing flight

17. The breez|y call | of in | cense-breath|ing morn

46. Per haps| in this | neg lec | ted spot | is laid

59. Some mute | in glo|rious Mil|ton here| may rest

69. The strug|gling pangs | of con| scious truth | to hide

as well as in lines 103, 104, 107, 108, 110, 111, 113 and 115. As we have hinted earlier, the iambic metre here is preferred for solemn subjects of sometimes paradoxical kind. Therefore, the poem by its use of the iambic pentameter makes universal statements about life and death which are grounded in Gray's feelings about his own life. As a kind of epitaph for Gray himself, the basic metre here inscribes the poem within the tradition of poets contemplating their legacy.

As we have observed above, the metrical system of the poem is marked by counterpoint. This occurs in several lines including line 4:

4. And leaves| the world | to dark | ness and | to me

in which the fourth foot, rather than an iamb, becomes a substituted equivalent pyrrhic foot. The phenomenon spans major portions of the poem and can be found also in line 5:

   5. Now fades | the glim | mering land | scape on | the sight

in which there are two instances of variation, on the first and the fourth foot giving us substituted equivalent spondee and pyrrhic feet respectively. The variation at the beginning of the third quatrain:

   9. Save that | from yon|der i|vy-man| tled tow'r

is a shade dramatic. The first foot is obviously a substituted equivalent trochee, and the problem of the potential extra unstressed syllable which would have occurred at the end in the word 'tower' is solved through elision which converts the nucleus triphthong /aʊə/ to a long vowel /ɑː/. We shall return to this in a moment. Other examples of equivalent substitution and variation are:

   13. Beneath| those rug|ged elms| that yew| tree's shade

in the second and final feet (spondee).

   14. Where heaves| the turf| in man|y a| mould 'ring|heap

in the first foot (spondee), fourth foot (pyrrhic) and fifth foot (trochee). In addition, line 14 ends in a hypermetric syllable. These variations continue in the following:

   15. Each in | his nar| row cell| for e| ver laid

where the first foot is a substituted equivalent trochee.

   23. No child| ren run| to lisp| their sire's | return

   29. Let not| Am bi| tion mock| their use| ful toil

Lines 23 and 29 are similar in their variational possibilities. The first foot in each case can be stressed as a spondaic metre or, if we pronounce the initial determiner *no* and verb *let* as unstressed syllables, they might conform to the routine of the iambic pentameter of the lines. But this monotony would vitiate the music of the poem. There are equivalent substitution instances in lines:

   30. Their home|ly joys| and des|ti ny | obscure

in the fourth foot which is pyrrhic, and:

   31. Nor Grand|eur hear | with a | dis dain|ful smile

in the third foot, also a pyrrhic metre.

In line 93, there is another instance of equivalence:

   93. For thee| who, mind|ful of | th'un hon| our'd dead

occurring in the third foot as a substituted pyrrhic. Lines 105 and 106 present interesting and intriguing variations from the iambic pattern:

   105. Hard by | yon wood | now smil|ing as |in scorn

   106. Mutt'ring | his way | ward fan|cies he | would rove

But as hinted at earlier, these variations within the urgent and solemn movement of the grandeur of the iambic pentameter serve not only as a check on the routine and monotony that might otherwise mar its beauty but also as indicators of the excitement at the virtues of the rustics whose mortality is commemorated – a kind of poetic comic relief.

An important phonological deviation which aids the metre of the poem is elision. In reality, this is dominated by syncope (medial syllables), for example:

         o'er (lines 2,38 and 63); tow'r (line 9); bow'r (line 11);

         twitt'ring (line 18); pow'r (line 33); mutt'ring (line 106);

         fav'rite (line 110); and mis'ry (line 123).

The rest of the examples such as *flatt'ry* (line 44), *repress'd* (line 51), *hist'ry* (line 64), *ev'n* (lines 77, 91 and 92) *frown'd* (line 119), *mark'd* (line 120), *gain'd* (line 124) and *wish'd* (line 124) appear to be strictly orthographic as the

elided letters are redundant in the modern pronunciation of these words. A possible explanation is that these letters acquired redundancy only in the course of time after the age of Gray.

The only instance of aphesis (initial syllable) occurs in line 124 in the item *'twas* as follows:

124. Hĕ gain'd|frŏm Hĕav|ĕn 'twăs|all hĕ |wĭsh'd ă|friĕnd

which results in a hypermetric syllable in the final syllable as well as one pyrrhic (third foot) and two trochees (fourth and fifth feet).There are a few examples of apocope (final syllable), and they occur in *oft* (lines 9 and 98), *morn* for *morning* (line 17) and *yon* for *yonder* (line 105). The other three examples of apocope in the poem:

> 35. th'inevitable (the inevitable)
>
> 61. th'applause (the applause)
>
> 93. th'unhonour'd (the unhonoured)

appear to occur medially because of their role in joining two separate words together through the elision of the final unstressed nucleus of *the*. This has the vigorous phonaesthetic effect of reducing the number of syllables from six to five (*th'inevitable*), from three to two (*th'applause*) and from four to three (*th'unhonour'd*).

9.2 Rhyme

The rhyme scheme of the poem is the heroic quatrain also referred to as alternate or cross rhyme – *abab cdcd* and so on. **The end rhymes** are fully masculine consisting mainly of monosyllabic words in which the nucleus segments with or without the coda are mostly either diphthongs: *day*/*way*[eɪ], *sight*/*fight*[ɑɪ], *holds*/*folds*[əʊ], *shade*/*laid*[eɪ], *care*/*share*[eə], *broke*/*stroke*[əʊ], *gave*/*grave*[eɪ], *raise*/*praise*[eɪ], *laid*/*swayed*[eɪ], *page*/*rage*[eɪ], *bear*/*air*[eə] and so on, or long vowels: *lea*/*me*[iː], *heap*/*sleep*[iː], *morn*/*horn*[ɔː], *serene*/*unseen*[iː], *dawn*/*lawn*[ɔː], *scorn*/*forlorn*[ɔː], *tree*/*he*[iː] and *borne*/*thorn*[ɔː]. We have noted already that the long vowels and diphthongs are generally preferred for peaceful, solemn and contemplative subjects. However, there are of course a very small number of rhymes wrought with the short vowel nucleus such as *shed*/*bed*[e], *bust*/*dust*[ʌ], *breast*/*rest*[e], *protect*/*decked*[e], *dead*/*led*[e], *hill*/*rill* [ɪ] and *send*/*friend*[e], which represent quick movement, agitation or triviality.

As can be seen above, the overwhelming majority of these vowels occur in closed syllables, that is, syllables with codas, but again, a very small number occur in open syllables and these are: *day*/*way*, *care*/*share*, *bear*/*air*, *lea*/*me* and *tree*/*he*. The preponderance of closed syllables in the rhyme clearly reinforces the vigorous nature of the rhyme making it suitable for the inherent paradox in the poem.

There are also variations even in the nature of the rhyme which create additional phonological deviations. There are instances of half or imperfect rhymes, and these occur in: *toil*/*smile* (off rhyme= ɔɪ/ɑɪ), *withstood*/*blood* (eye rhyme = ʊ/ʌ), *rove*/*love* (eye rhyme = əʊ/ʌ) and *abode*/*God* (off rhyme = əʊ/ɒ). Together with the short vowel rhymes, these variations in rhyme represent 'homely joys' which the rustics used to know while alive, and it is significant that they are found mainly where such mundane matters are described. Consider the rapid and trivial activities of the birds and the rustic villagers described in these rhyming lines:

> The *swallow twitt'ring* from the *straw built shed*.
>
> No more shall *rouse them from their lowly bed*.

The first implies quick movement while the second describes the mundane activity of waking up daily in the morning. These ideas are phonaesthetically governed by the short vowel nucleus end rhyme /ed/.

9.3 Onomatopoeia

Compared to the other phonological devices, onomatopoeia is employed sparingly in this poem, but where it occurs, it reinforces the gravity, rural solemnity of virtuous living and the temporal nature of existence. It thus, conveys echoes of the posthumous recognition of virtues which were swamped by the mundaneness of life. Three examples of onomatopoeia are governed by bilabial plosives:

1./b/ blazing (line 21)= fire; explosive, ferocious activity as well as mundane (trivial) enjoyments.

2./b/ babble (line 104)=indistinct sounds made by the brook where the persona used to pass the time idly; mundaneness.

3./p/ pealing (line 40)= loud sound of bells reverberating in the churchyard eulogizing the virtues of the rustics.

The other plosives are alveolar as follows:

4. /t/ tolls (line 1)= bell ringing, indicating slow and less emphatic but inexorable movement towards mortality.

5. /d/ droning (line 7)= buzz or hum of the beetle indicating monotonous mundane activity like babble above.

and also a velar plosive:

6. /g/ glimmering (line 5)= a faint glow; light indicating weariness and parting day or life.

There are two onomatopoeic words of liquid approximants:

7. /l/ lowing (line 2) = deep mooing from the herd indicating fatigue at the close of day or life.

8. /l/ lisp (line 23)= when/s/ and /z/ sound like /θ/ and /ð/ respectively indicating simplicity, lack of sophistication, and of children's innocence and excitement. In addition to the above, there is also one example of labio-velar approximant:

9. /w/ wheel (line 7)= sound of beetle's wings and wind in flight similar to *droning* above.

Finally, there is an instance of affricate onomatopoeia:

10. /tʃ/ chill (line 51) = cold; severe; emphasizing restraints to greatness and suggesting discomfort.

These onomatopoeic words phonaesthetically describe and echo the very ambience of the activities of the rustics whose latent virtues and greatness the poet contemplates and enjoins others to commemorate.

9.4 Alliteration, Assonance and Consonance

These three phonological tropes are exploited fully by Gray in this poem. Like the others, alliteration, assonance and consonance function as the phonological linkage in meaning between two or more lexical items. They transcend their merely decorative attributes, and this is evident in the following examples:

3. The *pl*owman homeward *pl*ods his *w*eary *w*ay /pl/ /w/ (alliteration)

19. The *c*ock's shrill *c*larion, or e*ch*oing horn/ k/ (alliteration)

22. H*ea*ven did a r*e*comp*e*nse as largely s*e*nd /e/ assonance)

124. He gained from H*ea*ven ('twas all he wished) a fr*ie*nd /e/ (assonance)

As can be seen, although the repeated phonemes do not exactly occur in consecutive words within the respective lines, they enable the reader to force a semantic linkage between the words despite the intervening, sometimes irrelevant words. As a result, the lexical items *plowman* and *plods; weary* and *way* and *cock, clarion* and *echoing* have a decidedly stronger semantic affinity with one another than with the other items in the line just as the items *Heaven*, *recompense* and *send* as well as *Heaven* and *friend* are more of the main 'messages' of the lines than the others.

Other examples of this phonaesthetic exploitation of segments include for **alliteration**:

48. *l*iving *l*yre /l/ (luxury; rest; happiness)

55. *F*ull many a *f*lower … *b*orn to *b*lush /f, b/ (wings; scorn; neglect)

88. *l*ong *l*ingering *l*ook behind /l/ (luxury; rest; eagerness)

103. *l*istless *l*ength /l/ (luxury; rest; relaxation)

107. *w*oeful *w*an like *o*ne forlorn /w/ (weak; unenthusiastic)

108. *c*razed with *c*are or *c*rossed /k/ (discomfort; cruelty)

113. *d*irges *d*ue /d/ (short and final; unhappy)

assonance:

97. sw*ai*n m*ay* s*ay* /eɪ/

110. h*ea*th tr*ee* /iː/ ⎫ peaceful rest; solemnity

127. trembling h*o*pe rep*o*se /əʊ/ ⎭

consonance:

84. teach the ru*st*ic morali*st* /st/ (discomfort; cruelty)

100. The su*n* upo*n* the upla*n*d law*n* /n/ (skill; active: repetitive)

125. *s*eek hi*s* merit*s* to disclo*s*e /s/ (soothing; smooth; soft)

10. Conclusion

The phonological features of Gray's 'Elegy' do more than 'decorate' the external form of the poem. These foregrounded suprasegmental and phonaesthetic features such as metre, rhyme, onomatopoeia, alliteration, consonance and assonance are organized into meaningful cohesive patterns of melodic contemplation about the possibilities for virtuous living and greatness among simple, rural people. The poem, although described as an elegy, lacks the traditional features of an elegy such as invocation, flowers and mourners. Rather, it is replete with the full complement of phonaesthemes in which the sounds echo the sense of the description, which is about latent grandeur and the need to recognize and eulogize virtuous living, hard work and 'homely joys'.

Phonaesthetically, the iambic pentameter of the poem is largely appropriate to its themes. Yet the numerous instances of counterpoint and substitution of equivalent metres of trochee, spondee and pyrrhic signify a celebration and a relief from any ambience of mourning that might otherwise be imposed by a strict, unvarying iambic pentameter. This deviation counteracts the gloom, and also supports all the other meanings of the poem. This is also the case with other sound devices such as rhyme, onomatopoeia and alliteration, which echo the virtues of the 'rude Forefathers of the hamlet' as they 'sleep'. Consequently, the preponderance of these phonological features and their phonaesthetic qualities makes Gray's 'Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard' more of a contemplative poem of eulogy (panegyric) rather than a traditional elegy.

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