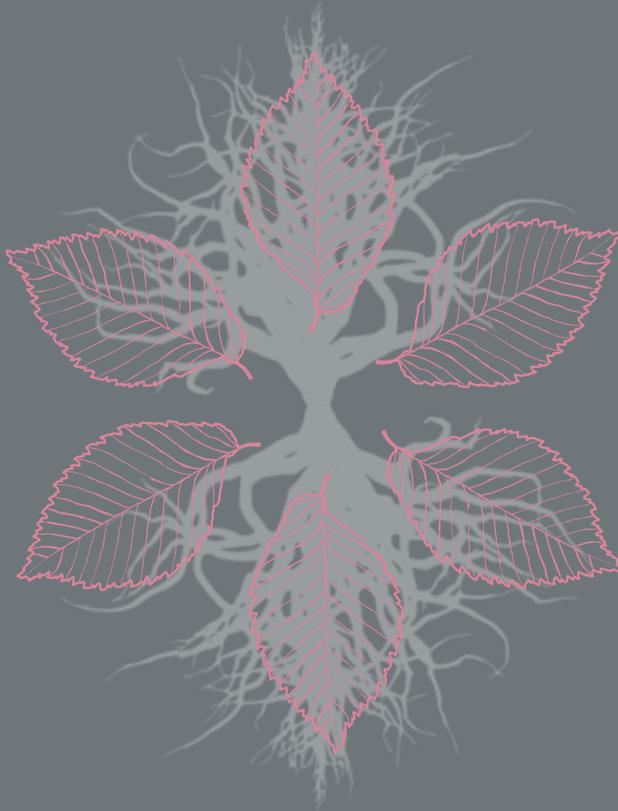


# GENRE AND ...

Copenhagen Studies in Genre 2



Ekbatana

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Ed. Sune Auken,  
Palle Schantz Lauridsen, &  
Anders Juhl Rasmussen

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Edited by  
Sune Auken, Palle Schantz Lauridsen,  
& Anders Juhl Rasmussen

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*Genre and ...*  
*Copenhagen Studies in Genre 2*

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& Anders Juhl Rasmussen

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# **Copenhagen Studies in Genre**

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# READING GENRE

# GENRE AND LYRIC POETRY

René Rasmussen

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE is to pinpoint the unique status of lyric poems within the genre of poetry as such. This will be done with special focus on the poetry of recent decades, as genres cannot be understood in isolation from a historical viewpoint—and it is unfortunately only possible, for obvious reasons, to introduce such a viewpoint within a synchronic perspective. Although several Nordic examples will be introduced here, the theoretical discussion of lyric poetry that follows is international in orientation. While it is of course possible to point to both Nordic and non-Nordic positions and understandings that are not included here, the theoretical context at issue in those cases should support the understanding developed here. The first aspect of lyric poems to consider is their typographical form.

Until the end of the Middle Ages, many texts were arranged in a manner that is often associated today with the genre of poetry, namely, in stanzas (continuous groups of lines) and in verse (individual lines).<sup>1</sup> Thus there are, for example, ancient and medieval legal texts that have such a form. Afterward the situation changed considerably—such texts were given a form that no longer resembled a set of stanzas and verses—but this does not mean that poetry can still be identified by this format today. Poems may have all sorts of other typographic formats. At times they can even form figures or shapes consisting of letters arranged in a certain way; at other times they may have a different typographical format such that there

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Fafner (1994, pp. 274). Fafner, however, refers to this transition only indirectly. See also Preminger et al. (1993, p. 1349).

are no stanzas or verses, but the text fills the page, i.e., with justified left and right margins. Nor does it help to clarify the matter that there are texts that *can* be readily identified as prose, but which include longer or shorter passages that are similar to sets of verses and stanzas. The typographical formatting of a given text, therefore, is only one possible indication of what genre it inscribes itself into.

This indicates that poems, as they may appear today, cannot be determined as such by a glance at their typographical form, though this may be important in certain cases. A number of important characteristics lie beyond the text's graphic form. These include the various ways in which poetry can flourish: narratively, dramatically, and lyrically, where "narratively" relates to a course of events and the particular events it contains, "dramatically" pertains to an exchange of messages, and "lyrically" concerns the words' arrangement and the dominant rhetoric that emerges from it. As stated previously, our focus is on lyric poetry and the enigmatic traits that are associated with it, which constitute a distinctive "event" in the language.

But first let us look at the start of Lyn Hejinian's *My Life*, which is 120 pages long:

*A pause, a rose,  
something on paper*

A moment yellow, just as four years later, when my father returned home from the war, the moment of greeting him, as he stood at the bottom of the stairs, younger, thinner than when he had left, was purple – though moments are no longer so colored.

Somewhere, in the background, rooms share a pattern of small roses. Pretty is as pretty does. In certain families, the meaning of necessity is at one with the sentiment of pre-necessity. The better things were gathered in a pen. (op. cit., p. 7)

At first glance, this section is more reminiscent of a prose text than a poem, since by virtue of its typographical structure it does not include a set of verses and stanzas. Nevertheless, it can still be assigned to the genre of poetry, largely thanks to its special rhetoric (e.g., its many metaphors), its lack of action, and the special composition of its words, which do not contain any single unique message.<sup>2</sup> This means that the reader's focus should be on the words themselves and the mood that they evoke. For this reason, this text constitutes what in both Danish and English is called a prose poem.

The term "prose poem" may seem to be a contradiction in terms. Hejinian's poem appears graphically as prose that fills up the whole page, without the line-breaks that are characteristic of many poems; but it should be read—like a number of other poems with similar typographic formats—as poetry, since it contains a number of features, such as linguistic fragmentation, word contractions, repetitions, and rhythms, that are primarily characteristics of poetry. Prose poems, moreover, are not to be confused with free verse, i.e., verse without meter (Preminger, 1993, pp. 977). At the same time, the text includes two different fonts, one regular and one italic, the latter of which is set somewhat apart, as a special commentary on the rest. Such use of distinct fonts is not an unknown phenomenon in prose, but is much more common in poetry. The text thereby inscribes itself into the genre of poetry.

In many ways, this text is representative of lyric poetry as a special branch of poetry—which can be divided into three sub-genres, namely, lyric, dramatic, and narrative poems, where the adjectives "lyric," "dramatic," and "narrative" refer to the mode (narrative form and/or discourse)

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jakobson's notion of the poetic function, which emphasizes that the focus is directed at the sign itself, at the arrangement of the words themselves, rather than at an extralinguistic object, or at the words' referent. Language is here detached from the extralinguistic object, inasmuch as attention is directed toward language itself and its ambiguities (Jakobson, 1960).

that is prevalent at a given time. The latter two subgenres include a narrative that incorporates events and/or characters (people, objects, animals, etc.). In narrative poems, as in many prose texts, the story is further presented by a narrator, often a first-person narrator. By contrast, in dramatic poetry, as in many plays, the story is presented through action and the characters' speech (Furniss & Bath, 1999, p. 162). An obvious example of the former is Henrik Ibsen's *Terje Vigen* (1862/1964); whereas many texts by Percy Bysshe Shelley represent plays written in stanzas, and which are intended more to be read than to be performed. It is not just in older poems that we find dramatic and narrative forms, however, but also in more recent poetry.

### DRAMATIC POETRY

One example of a recent dramatic poem is Benny Andersen's "Præcision" ["Precision"] from *Stemmer fra reservatet* [Voices from the Reservation] (here cited from his *Samlede digte* [Collected Poems]), where two literary characters are speaking to each other (in other poems, there are more such characters):

"I felt that she was stepping on my toes. Not in a bodily sense—but  
I felt it."

"Explain a bit more precisely."

"She was stepping on me."

"Were you lying down?"

"No, it was in company."

"Describe it a bit more precisely."

"Well, that would take a complicated explanation, which will become more and more involved the more I hope to clarify what it is all about, so I'm afraid that the linguistic result would become rather imprecise."

"It's already becoming that. Start over." (p. 357)

Although the text does not specify who the speakers are, this is clearly a dialogue that, at first glance, more closely resembles a play than a poem, inasmuch as one speaker turns to the other because of a particular situation that has arisen (namely, that his or her toes have been stepped on). Moreover, the reader only comes to know the text's characters on the basis of what they say, and clearly neither of the two is the author (Benny Andersen). What nonetheless gives this text a poetic character is, first and foremost, the obvious fact that it is found in a collection of poems; the fact that it is less than five pages long; and the fact that it is intended to be read rather than to be performed. In addition, at a number of points the text highlights the presence of metaphor, which is a central feature of many poems. Namely: a conventional metaphor (also called a dead metaphor), here being "stepped on," is interpreted, despite the narrator's protests ("not in a bodily sense"), as a concrete phenomenon ("Were you lying down?")—thereby highlighting the special status of (living) metaphor.

Later in the poem, confusion about this metaphor only increases: "You cannot say that she has stepped on your toes or your feelings if this is about a real kick. The language must be more accurate; otherwise it will crumble" (p. 359). This confusion emphasizes that the focus is largely directed at language itself. This is, in fact, stated quite directly here: "otherwise it will crumble." This also appears at the end of the poem: "It will get harder and harder both to express oneself accurately and simultaneously to fit it all in here in the reservation" (p. 361). The word "reservation," *reservatet*, is a reference to the poetry collection, *Stemmer fra reservatet*, emphasizing that the poem's words are elements of a poem that is found in a collection of poems, and which *cannot* be precise just because it is a poem about language's relationship to itself—about its lyrical effects.

This can also be understood from another perspective. An immediate reading of the text might emphasize that it deals (only) with a dialogue between two people. But a mediated reading would need to point out that it

also has to do with the fact that the text “narrates” something other than that dialogue. Namely: it is a text that deals with itself *qua* text (language).

### **NARRATIVE POEMS**

Narrative poems are characterized by containing a special course of events. One example of this is Benny Andersen’s “Den trøtte kriger” [The Weary Warrior] in *Portrætgalleri* (1966) [Portrait Gallery] (here cited from his *Samlede Digte* [Collected Poems], p. 244):

The warrior is fighting with his horns  
 his tired feet  
 the warrior is tired  
 but he still has overtime  
 he has the gun with him at home, it needs to be cleaned  
 he asked the general for a vacation  
 just fourteen days of miracles and new courage  
 but no  
 the warrior knows no holiday  
 report here at 0700 tomorrow  
 with the gun cleaned and ready  
 the warrior buzzes out in the yard  
 aren't you coming inside his wife asks  
 no he replies come out here with the coffee  
 while he takes the gun apart  
 can I help asks the warrior's son  
 dad you're so brave  
 can I be you when I grow up  
 sing a song dad  
 the warrior sings Way way out deep in the woods  
 there was a little mountain  
 inside the gun there is a machine gun

inside that a rifle  
inside that a musket  
inside that a flintlock gun  
inside that a crossbow  
inside that a bow and arrow  
and on the arrow there was a small flag  
there has never been a lovelier flag  
and it is for you to play with  
now I'm tired  
said the warrior tiredly  
I won't put it together again  
so they'll have to come and get me and put me in jail  
and shoot me as a deserter  
I'm dead tired of all of that  
here's the coffee his wife just says  
and the next morning he hurries  
to put the gun together again  
whoa I almost forgot the flag  
give it to me you rascal are you crazy  
it's not for playing with  
I'm just tired he says  
promises the boy another, bigger flag  
just make it until the war begins  
no time to think about corns right now  
the warrior is just tired now.

The course of action in this poem, briefly put, is that a very tired soldier is on leave at home, cleans his gun, talks to his son, sings a song, is given coffee by his wife, sleeps, puts the gun together again, and returns to war. This could also have been the plot of a short prose text; but what distinguishes the poem from such a text is *inter alia* the layout with line breaks

(enjambments), the unmarked elisions between quoted speech (e.g., the general's order: "report here at 0700 tomorrow") and direct speech (e.g., the son's words: "dad you're so brave"), repetitions (e.g., of the word "tired"), or special linguistic expressions (e.g., "make it until the war begins"). Together, these aspects join to emphasize that the focus is on language, the composition of words, and the particular atmosphere that the poem introduces (war fatigue; the contrast between the son's positive notion of his father's courage and his actual exhaustion/burnout). The poem is more about these aspects than it is about the actual course of events that it depicts.

In contrast to lyrical poetry, however, the words of this text do not express the inner mood of a speaker/writer, but rather a story that includes characters (the warrior, the son, the wife, and the general). Moreover, this is a story that is partly told by a higher authority (the narrator), whereas other narrative poems involve a first-person narrator who appears responsible for the story (cf., e.g., Dy Plambeck, *Buresø-fortællinger* [Buresø Tales] (2005)). Folk ballads, too, are often narrative poems sung by a person who does not claim to be their author (Furniss & Bath, 1999, p. 163).

### THE LANGUAGE OF LYRIC POEMS

Beyond special typographical formatting—as in Hejinian's text—another feature by which lyric poems distinguish themselves from dramatic and narrative poems is that they express a particular subjectivity that cannot necessarily be attributed to an explicit character or to a dramatic (here in the sense of "fateful") event, but simply constitute a "voice" within the poem. According to some theories, this voice is global with respect to the text (Staiger, 1968). Such theories often explain this voice as based on the notion of a collective lyric *I* who vouches for the text; others argue that there could just as well be multiple levels of voices in poetry.

All of this provides elements for a preliminary identification of the genre of lyric poetry. But as stated above, and as Furniss and Bath under-

score in *Reading Poetry: An Introduction*, it is not possible to provide a comprehensive definition of the genre of poetry that suits all of its sub-genres and individual examples (1999, p. 165). Any candidate definition must continually be tested in relation to concrete poems, and must be adjusted according to the historical developments that literature undergoes. The same holds for lyric poetry.

In addition to the special position of the narrator, and the potentially non-strophic setting, there is a certain similarity between lyric poems and songs, as is also evidenced by the Greek etymological origin of “lyric,” namely, *lyre*. While a lyric poem is not (necessarily) a song, the use of the words “lyric” and “lyrics” in connection with songs (in Anglophone contexts) suggests that there is a very intimate relationship between songs and lyric poetry. The crux of the matter is not the melody that is bound up with music, and which does not necessarily appear in lyric poetry, but rather that lyric poetry, like songs, often demands verbal activity, namely, a reading. This means that not only is there a special subjectivity associated lyric poetry and songs, but also an inter-subjectivity, inasmuch they can be sung or read aloud (Brewster, 2009, p. 1).

While Hejinian’s text may not be the most obvious example of this connection, modern sonnets would clearly lose quality if their metric and rhythmic aspects were ignored.<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, Hejinian’s text draws attention to another aspect that is essential, namely, length. While lyric poetry is often defined by the poems’ short length, Hejinian’s text demonstrates that this is not a sustainable definition.

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<sup>3</sup> Such sonnets thus often share characteristics with sonnets of the past, e.g. Shakespeare’s, but they also distinguish themselves from them by virtue of, for example, theme (e.g., alienation in the city, or terrorism) or language (its unique present-day forms). It is thus not the absence or presence of meter or rhyme that is decisive for whether a poem is a lyric poem or not, now that lyric poetry no longer abides by expectations of particular kinds of rhyme, or of a special metrical form.

But let us return to the element of subjectivity that is central to lyrical poems, and which cannot be treated in isolation from their special linguistic character. Because of the latter, attention must often be paid to the words' peculiar meaning, which stands out as relatively detached from the world of the reader, or as meaning that is self-generated by the poem itself, and cannot be converted into the terms of the reader's own semantic world. As has been indicated above, in many cases there is no logical plot for the reader to follow, or no identifiable persons who perform certain acts, or who are subject to certain events. Lyric poems often furnish the reader with only a very small body of distinctive linguistic evidence.

Here the peculiar linguistic form, uniqueness, or special repetitions of lyric poems are central, including their rhetoric. For this reason, lyric poems are only rarely presented in the form of a retelling or paraphrase. What is more, the structure of such poems often works to dissolve a univocal relation to an external reality. The words' "reference" becomes self-sufficient (Kittang & Aarseth, 1993, p. 41). By virtue of their language games or rhetoric, on the other hand, such poems create new meanings that break with old, pre-established meanings, or that give the poem its special linguistic character. New semiotic contexts are produced, while old and entrenched ones are set in motion; or room is made for areas that lie beyond the dimension of meaning. It is therefore impossible to determine, on the basis of a linguistic understanding of the general semantic systems of language alone, the meaning conveyed by words' sounds, their rhythmic qualities, or their particular typographical format.

This highlights the fact that lyric poems do contain special imagery (metaphor, metonymy, etc.), as well as more formal elements (length, rhythm, alliteration, space, verses, stanzas, etc.). For understanding the latter, their repetition is key. And here we find another central difference between lyric poetry and other major literary forms: the division into verses and stanzas often gives lyric poems a graphical form, and a special discursive form, that distinguish it from a prose text or play. The typograph-

ical arrangement, on the other hand, may be more or less important for the poem.

This division between imagery and formal elements is very similar to John Frow's division of genre aspects into three key areas: formal, rhetorical, and thematic organization (2006, p. 74f). The thematic aspect cannot be separated entirely from the other two; the three areas overlap. The discursive form thus belongs both to formal organization (verses, enjambment, etc.) and to rhetorical organization, much as a theme will relate both to the possible dissolution of an "I" that is present in a poem, and to the discursive form that is related to it. The same applies to the enigmatic features that have to do with rhetoric (by virtue of the words' peculiar composition, e.g., in metaphors), with formal characteristics (e.g., enjambment that necessitates a reading back and forth over multiple verses), and with theme (e.g., death, loss, sex, and even the peculiarity of the poetic language itself). The lyric poem's peculiar language can, moreover, be connected with something to which the poem represents an approximation, but which it cannot capture in language, namely, what is nameless (discussed below).

### **THE FORMAL ORGANIZATION**

In narrative poetry, formal aspects are often of secondary importance—including the page layout and the purely typographical format. The choice of rhyme scheme, for example, may be determined by convention or custom; whereas in lyric poems, typographical format can be of far greater significance. For this reason, the rhythm found in lyric poems can seem more intentional than what appears in dramatic or narrative poems; but this rhythm is not always easy to capture. As noted previously, in certain lyric poems the rhythm follows patterns that differ from the standard metrical units, such as iambs, trochees, dactyls, or anapests. Documentation of these rhythms can help in systematizing the various rhythmic units in a poem; but particular metrical patterns do not have predetermined meanings, and

are by no means sure indicators of the intrinsic genres of texts. On the contrary: such patterns gain expressive value each time they are used, and by virtue of their contexts. This value cannot be detached from the poem's words, but is always dependent on its semantic and tonal plan. It is important to be aware that such poems are primarily concerned with rhythm, not with meter.

One of the most important tonal effects is rhyme. Although rhyme has lost its significance for a large swath of contemporary lyric poetry, it continues to play an important role in other lyric poems. Specific rhymes and set metrics are no longer necessary parts of contemporary poems, though they were normative in the past. But because historically such features were once central, and because they do still appear in certain lyric poems, three functions of rhyme can be identified briefly here. 1) First, rhyme has a purely musical function. Through it sounds are organized into patterns: the same vowels and consonants are repeated. This gives the language of the poem an organized character. Here it is not only end rhyme, but also alliteration, that plays a major role. 2) Rhyme also has a metric function: it marks the end of each verse, and moreover relates verses to one another in strophic patterns. 3) Rhyme's third important function, meanwhile, is semantic: words and images are lined up (Kittang & Aarseth, 1993, p. 126). Rhyme rouses the reader's expectations and adds tension to the poem, which is triggered or weakened when the echo arrives.

The dissonance of Charles Baudelaire's poems offers an extreme example of these features. Here a well-formed rhyme often stands in contrast to the semantic content that the words evoke (death, loss, melancholy, social exclusion, etc.). Another example of this is the dissonance in Viggo Madsen's *Haiku og Børnerim* [Haiku and Nursery Rhymes] (2008), where a well-formed rhythm often stands in contrast to the possible meanings it evokes: death, loss, sex, bodily discharge, etc. Here it is death and sexuality that are linked in peculiar rhymes:

THE CLOTH ON THE LEFT HANGS  
 FURTHER DOWN THAN THE CLOTH ON THE RIGHT  
 EVEN THOUGH THE ONE ON THE RIGHT IS HEAVIER  
 One is light and one is heavy [*tung*]  
 hamlet, he was born on Mors  
 jesus hangs upon his cross [*kors*]  
 therefore he will get this purse [*pung*]  
 (Madsen, op. cit., unpag.)

Another formal aspect is, as stated, the poem's length. But Hejinian's text reveals that lyric poems are not necessarily short. T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922/2003) is another example of how the expected shortness of such poems can be unceremoniously exceeded when it comes to strophic texts. Its graphical features (verses and stanzas) are those of texts that meet a certain typographic standard, and which also set aside room for a particular kind of utterance that follows the line-breaks that they contain. It will often be necessary both to take account of line-breaks—i.e., to read the verses as independent lines—and also to read right past them—i.e., to read multiple verses as coherent wholes. In this way the reader is forced to read back and forth over the line-breaks, past the poem's enjambments. An example of this is the following poem, "IKKE DØDEN" [Not Death] by Søren Ulrik Thomsen:

### **Not death**

Death is not the girlfriend who never returns  
     from her trip away from Metro-Nord, far away,  
 death is not silver and turquoise  
     sailing away from fascination's dissolved body  
 death is not to be overthrown on the street

among those who bow down and those who hurry  
 death is  
 not to love and everything is as usual. (1981, p. 50)

The last two verses can be read as a coherent whole, “death is / not to love and everything is as usual,” or as separate: “death is,” and “not to love and everything is as usual.” These alternative readings cast death and its existence in two greatly different tones.

Everything that is written in verse, set in stanzas, or formatted with a special typography that breaks with the standard page layout, in which the page is filled all the way to the left and/or right margin, represents a distinctive graphical form that, in our time, can generally be attributed to poetry. In certain cases, these typographical features also tend to be given a specific genre character—as is the case, for example, for sonnets and figurative poems. As mentioned above, this does not mean that texts that contain such typographical features exclude a narrative mode, for example—i.e., a special kind of report, possibly including a first-person narrator, as we find in the Danish poet Dy Plambeck’s *Buresø-fortællinger*. The latter is a text containing graphical features that indicate that it is about poetry, even though its title and narrative mode immediately indicate otherwise. Even though the title makes clear that the text concerns tales of Buresø, as if these were short prose texts, and even though the text’s continuous first-person narrator, Mily, recounts a number of minor incidents in her life, the text is set forth in stanzas and verses, and so it counts as a poetry collection. The reader is therefore forced to take its special enjambments into account, even if the text inscribes itself into the genre of narrative poetry.

For this reason, the special graphical signal that one associates with a poem that does not fill the whole page cannot be taken as a sure indication of whether or not we are dealing with poetry. There are also novels that, to a minor extent, break with the novel’s prevailing typographical style (e.g., passages in James Joyce’s *Ulysses* (1922/1990)). The typographical signal

is a feature that distributes itself among genres, even if lyric poems do often contain a distinctive typography that includes enjambment. Giorgio Agamben goes so far as to claim that

the possibility of enjambment constitutes the only criterion for distinguishing poetry from prose. For what is enjambment, if not the opposition of a metrical limit to a syntactical limit, of a prosodic pause to a semantic pause? “Poetry” will then be the name given to the discourse in which this opposition is, at least virtually, possible; “prose” will be the name for the discourse in which this opposition cannot take place. (Agamben, 1996/1999, p. 109)

While this is a somewhat daring claim, it emphasizes that the enunciation of the utterance constitutes a special area within poetry. But because enjambment is not always explicit in lyric poems, even if a contrast between metrical and syntactical borders is always at least virtually present, determination of a text’s specific genre must nonetheless, from time to time, be evaluated by taking into account its length, lyrical elements, graphical signals, and so forth.

## RHETORIC

Beyond its formal organization, lyric poetry is characterized by a distinctive tier of rhetoric, in which metaphor in particular plays a major role.<sup>4</sup> To be clear, what is crucial to such poems is not a distinctive tier of rhetoric that can be linked to the semantics of their language, but rather the fact that

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<sup>4</sup> For more on metaphor and other rhetorical figures, see, e.g., Bercoff (1999, chapter 10, “Les figures,”), and Culler (1981/2008, p. 209-233). The account of rhetoric that is developed in what follows does not rest on the notion that poetry should convince the reader of this or that—a pragmatic dimension, as Frow proposes (2006, p. 9)—but that it is part of the poem’s organization. Rhetoric does not embellish poetry; it constitutes it.

such poems contain a *remainder* that cannot be absorbed into, or identified with, the semantic dimension of their rhetoric, or other semantic possibilities inherent in their language.<sup>5</sup> Briefly put, this means that it is impossible to comprehend the text fully. Now, this problem of a remainder that cannot be subsumed under the semantic dimension of rhetoric does not exclude the possibility that the remainder is something crystallized by this semantic dimension. But a crystallization is not a cause. The cause may very well be that such poems attempt precisely to specify what cannot be given meaning, by means and by virtue of a special kind of rhetoric.<sup>6</sup>

While the Danish poet Simon Grotrian's poems are not true examples of the above, the fact that they are drenched in rhetoric—often in the form of long sequences of metaphors that leave no room to identify their specific meaning—can be used to illustrate the point being made here. Grotrian's massive array of metaphors introduces a specific indeterminacy as to how such poems can or should be interpreted (cf. Rasmussen, 2008). An example:

The guards stand up in the ocean foam  
 happiness explodes beyond the bosom of the sun  
 the portraits that were stuck have nails in the stomach  
 eyes shut the world  
 with an eraser I feed the memory  
 of the coffin lid's hoe  
 the necessary thing, to sleep upright  
 The word when the living in the jump rope  
 the milky way's path over the harvest

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<sup>5</sup> The argumentation that follows is indebted to Doumet, 2004, pp. 16.

<sup>6</sup> Frow, on the other hand, tends to regard rhetoric as a form of decoration that is connected with the dimension of meaning: "... *formal and rhetorical structure always convey meaning*: An understanding of this is central to my argument about genre" (2006, p. 76).

and your kingdom is rife with  
 I stick the blade in  
 for everything is possible  
 just to be a diver. (Grotrian, 2007, p. 34)

The guards introduced in the first verse do not recur later in the poem, unless they are connected to the “diver” of the final verse; but no such connection is obvious in the text. However, they can be seen as God’s guardians (cf. v. 10: “your kingdom”), i.e., as angels who are emerging from the ocean foam; and this may explain how happiness explodes, expands, under the sun. But why “the bosom of the sun”? What is the sun’s bosom as a metaphor for? Does it represent God and his generosity—or something else? And again: Why does happiness explode? Perhaps the latter should be construed not as the expansion of happiness, but as its destruction, which might explain why eyes shut (themselves out of?) the world, as well as the death that is evoked by the coffin lid. But what is “the coffin lid’s hoe” for? And what is “necessary” connected to? To the hoe, or to “sleeping upright”? Approximate answers can certainly be given to some of these questions, but they lead only to a series of further questions, ending with the indeterminacy mentioned above. This puzzle thereby emerges as not merely one feature of such poems, but as their central aspect.

Thus any analysis or reading of Grotrian’s poems will quickly run aground on the text’s dilemmatic practice of avoidance or escape. One “solution” to this, as Stefan Kjerkegaard undertakes in his *Digte er bjergede halse* [Poems are Scavenged Throats] (2000), is to harness a massive analytical use of metaphors in order to tackle the remainder that falls outside, or is included among, the myriad metaphors that reign in Grotrian’s universe. For the most part, however, these simply continue along Grotrian’s own track. The analytical metaphors represent a special adaptation to the text that these poems represent—a text that is strikingly difficult

to access—inasmuch as they do not tackle the cause of the problem, but simply expand on the poems' own metaphors.

This use of metaphor also represents a radical break with the codes or paradigms that usually underlie the generation of metaphors (even though these tend to violate conventional codes and paradigms). It is now almost no longer possible to find antecedent paradigms; so Grotrian's metaphors establish their own codes, or special new codes, that resist a possible interpretation. This is an extreme version of the rhetoric of lyric poetry; the purpose of emphasizing this unique case is to underscore that rhetoric constitutes a special language that cannot be understood on the basis of its semantic aspects alone.

### **GENRE AND MODE**

Lyric poetry is a genre that is still in development. As Gérard Genette, for one, pointed out in his "Introduction à l'architexte" (1979/1992, pp. 60), there are no stable, ahistorical, or naturalized genres, though many interpreters of Aristotle's *Poetics*, for example, do expound his ideas as if such genres did exist. This does not mean that we cannot operate with genres, but that so operating would require introducing the historical features of each genre's various forms of existence. Similarly, attention must be paid to the fact that every individual text modifies the genre of which it is a part. Every new text inscribes itself into and out of a genre, so that the latter remains a changeable unit (see also Frow, 2006, p. 25). At the same time, there are modes that transcend genres. Genres must be considered in historical perspective—and as stated previously, it is beyond this article's scope to account for the historical development of lyric poetry. The focus here, instead, is on a number of sweeping issues that have arisen within in the last decades. To this end, it is helpful to introduce Gérard Genette's concept of mode.

Genette's concern is with the dramatic, epic, and lyric modes. He states further that modes pertain to utterances, and that genres (e.g., prose)

need not be prescribed or dictated in any way by the modes (e.g., narrative) that can be attached to them (cf. Genette, 1979/1992, p. 61). Genres are genuinely literary categories, whereas modes are derived from linguistics, and relate to the utterance as such (p. 65). Accordingly, Genette insists that there exist three types of mode in the world of literature: the narrative mode, the dramatic mode, and the lyric mode. Such modes represent overarching features that can be found in numerous literary texts, poems or otherwise; but this does not make them natural phenomena. The division into lyric, dramatic, and narrative poetry is consistent with Genette's concept of mode, as it is here applied to the various subgenres within poetry.<sup>7</sup>

Modes do not stand alone. A mode constitutes a qualification of a given genre (cf. Frow, 2006, p. 65). It must be pointed out that there do exist lyric poems containing dialogue, just as in dramatic poems. Similarly, narrative aspects can be found in lyric poems (Cf. Furniss & Bath, 1999, p. 171). This is this case, for example, in a number of the poems in Søren Ulrik Thomsen's collection *Rystet spejl* [Shaken Mirror] (2011), though the most important aspects in these are the unusual features of the language and the subjectivity that is tied to it. In other cases, other aspects must be introduced in order to establish a possible genre affiliation, including such thematic aspects as happiness, powerlessness, death, talk, speechlessness, fear, madness, the decomposition of the body, and sexuality. Accordingly, Frow emphasizes an intimate connection between theme and mode, defining "mode in the adjectival sense [as] a thematic and tonal qualification or 'colouring' of the genre; [and] genre or kind [as] a more specific organisation of texts with thematic, rhetorical and formal dimensions" (2006, p. 67).

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<sup>7</sup> By contrast, Janss and Refsum (2010) connect modes to what they call the three "major genres" [*storgenrer*]: epic, lyric, and drama. In so doing, they exclude themselves from providing an account of the difference among dramatic, narrative, and lyric poems.

On Genette's account, lyric poetry cannot trace its origins to ancient poetry, but has its roots in the early nineteenth century.<sup>8</sup> There are baroque poems (e.g., several of John Donne's texts (cf. Furniss & Bath, 1999, pp. 286)) that contain a constructed mood (confidence), an insecure analogy between the world of the poem and that of the reader (the divine world versus the human world, which is incomplete and defective), or a mood or distinctive suggestive effect (intended to convince the reader of the superiority of the divine world). In this respect, such baroque poems have features in common with lyric poems; but they lack the typographical possibilities of prose poems. Nor do they contain the distinctive subjective element that is central for lyric poetry, for they are intended to be sung by a congregation; similarly, the mood that they introduce is not (only) based on their particular linguistic form or self-reference, but on the community constituted by the congregation. Because such poems were often thought of as songs, they did not make up a unique linguistic universe. Rather, they were part of religious life in the society of the day.

### WRITING VS. SPEECH

What makes the language of lyric poems so striking is that it cannot be reduced to the lexical meanings of the poems' words. The context of a given word often makes it impossible to arrive at an understanding of its semantic dimension.<sup>9</sup> This can be further highlighted by the fact that such poems not only comprise graphical pieces of writing, but are also pieces of writing that are designed for, or that even insist on, reading aloud (cf. their possible affinity with songs). Written texts, however, can contain special forms of enjambment that may not necessarily be followed—or perhaps

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<sup>8</sup> For similar accounts, see, e.g., Larsen, 2009, p. 29, and Rabaté, 1996, p. 5.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Empson (1930/1949, p. 4), who states that poems assign their own "meaning" to their words.

cannot be followed—in readings.<sup>10</sup> A poem can also be presented typographically in a manner that makes readings difficult, forcing a continuous sliding back and forth between graphics and reading (cf. Thomsen’s poem “IKKE DØDEN” from *City Slang* (1981)).

The phenomenon just mentioned also suggests that the partial exclusion of the reading process is a distinctive aspect of such poems. Although a poem like “IKKE DØDEN” cannot be read aloud in full, it nonetheless does leave room for sliding back and forth between the voice (reading aloud) and the eye (seeing the text), which are both involved in every reading of such poems, silent or aloud. The voice that is associated with lyric poetry is a voice that is both inscribed into and excluded from the written text. It is inscribed into lyric poetry, inasmuch as such poetry relies on speech and demands to be read; but it is also excluded from lyric poetry, inasmuch as its typographical arrangement in the form of (for example) special enjambments and typographical characters can only be registered visually. In this context, the voice appears as an external intimacy for both the poem and the reader. It is external for the poem, because it derives from the act of reading; and it is external for the reader, because it is simultaneously undermined, in part, by the layout of the poem. Whether in excluded or present form, the voice is there; but it is also partly determined by the poem’s written form. To a great extent, voice is an essential feature for contemporary lyric poems, while it plays a lesser role in narrative poems (cf. Ibsen’s *Terje Vigen* and Benny Andersen’s narrative poem “Den trætte kriger” [The Weary Warrior], discussed earlier).

Lyric poems withdraw, so to speak, the voice that is tied to them, i.e., that is related to their possible readings, particularly those provoked by such phenomena as enjambment. They quiet this voice by making room for a silence that rests in their graphical form, enjambment, and other aspects of layout. This means that the language (namely, the spoken lan-

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. Kjørup’s description of Klaus Rifbjerg’s reading (2003, pp. 150).

guage) captured by the poem is more or less dissolved or overwhelmed by a special silence that is rooted in the poem's visible (graphical) elements. The visibility that is linked to the poem's graphical and written form dominates the element of speech, which the poem also demands. On the other hand, the silence that the poem conceals in speech, in reading aloud, constitutes an "invisibility" in this case. We are dealing, then, with an "invisibility" that is tied to the poem's visible appearance (as a piece of writing), but which cannot be reduced to that. Put briefly, the invisible element in the visible introduces an (invisible) silence into the act of reading the poem (aloud). When we read a lyric poem (aloud), we run into this problem, in the linguistic and graphical (utterance-related) crisis that is occasioned by the fact that the silent world makes an appearance in the speech that relates to the poem's reading, namely, the reading of its writing. "Writing is an object in the discourse [that] implicitly rejects the presence of the enunciation on the side of speech" (Charles-Wurtz, 2002, p. 108). This is an essential feature of lyric poetry, and one that is often thematized in the text.

### **THE LYRIC I: A MYTH**

The relation between speech and writing thus makes up a distinctive "dialogue" in lyric poems. Despite this, a number of theories describe such lyric poems as a narrator's spoken monologue.<sup>11</sup> Let us consider one such account more closely. Although lyric poems possess neither dramatic dialogue nor an overarching narrator—one who, so to speak, pulls the strings from a distance—there is, on this account, a unique closeness between what the speaker in the poem expresses and what is expressed or discussed by the poem as a whole.<sup>12</sup> Frequently, this closeness is further defined as a specific evocative magic encompassing both the narrated world and the narrator of the poem simultaneously. Such an assumption presupposes that,

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<sup>11</sup> See Brewster, 2009, p. 30f, for a brief summary of such theories.

<sup>12</sup> See Christian Janss and Christian Refsum, *op. cit.*, 28.

in this sense, a point of correspondence exists between the “outer” situation and the poem’s structuring subject or *I*.<sup>13</sup> In certain other versions of this account, there is talk not of a fusion, but of a divide or gap, between the poem’s *I* and its surroundings. Nevertheless, whether the poetic *I* is regarded as attached to or separated from the surrounding world evoked in the poem, this understanding of lyric poetry presupposes a lost, possible, real, or vanished unity between an *I* and its surroundings.<sup>14</sup>

To this extent, the lyric *I* is an entity present in all forms of poetry; but it does not necessarily appear in the third-person singular. In *The Three Voices of Poetry*, T. S. Eliot (1954) remarks that lyrical poems primarily have a single voice belonging to the poet, who is either speaking to him- or herself, or to no one at all.<sup>15</sup> This can often appear in the form of a “you,” which presupposes an “I” or a “we” who is addressing the “you” in question. In other cases, the *I* is only implicitly present in the text, but behind the poem’s words there is nonetheless a view or attitude that can be detected: a poetic “consciousness,” or a lyric *I*. On the other hand, there are also other kinds of poetry in which distance can be sensed between a poem’s *I* and the view that the poem otherwise sets forth, e.g., where irony or satire are present in relation to the narrating voice. We see this in narrative or dramatic poetry: for example, in the dramatic poems of Robert Browning.<sup>16</sup>

In lyric poetry, on the other hand, it remains the narrating voice or lyric *I* that ensures (a possible) identity between speaker and spoken, or between the describing entity and what is described. Here we find an overall lyric *I* vouching for the entire text, whether or not this takes the form of an explicit first-person narrator (an assumption that also underlies the Scandi-

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<sup>13</sup> This view is represented by, e.g., Emil Staiger, *Grundbegriffe des Poetik*, 60.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kittang and Aarseth, op. cit., 34.

<sup>15</sup> See also Brewster, 2009, p. 36.

<sup>16</sup> Cf. Furniss & Bath, op. cit., p. 176f.

navian category of *centrallyrik*; but as will be detailed below, the very idea of such a special kind of poetry stands or falls with the myth of the lyric *I*).

Such an account falters, however, in the face of such narrative poems as Ibsen's *Terje Vigen*, in which the main narrator (the *I*) tells the story of the title character, whose experiences and words are reproduced, even though he is already dead when the narrator relates his story. There are also a series of lyric poems in which the narrating *I* dies, or is otherwise dissolved, implying that there is a second narrator present beyond the *I* that at first glance seems responsible for the poem. The existence of such a (second) narrator refutes the notion of an overall lyric *I* that was to be responsible for everything in the text. Indeed, there is often a distinctive tension between the two, which indicates instability on the part of the lyric poem's narrator (its *I*) (cf. Rabaté, 1996, p. 66). Or as Brewster puts it: "the lyric 'I' is often an enigmatic, inconsistent figure or anchoring point in a poetic text" (2009, p. 34). This, however, is due not to a weak *I*, as Janss and Refsum assume in their *Lyrikkens liv: Innføring in diktlesning* [The Life of Lyric: Introduction to Reading Poetry] (2010, p. 20). It is due to the absence of an overall lyric self.

This can be clarified by appeal to the incomplete movement between writing and speech, or between voice and eye. This movement emphasizes that the reader does not occupy a unique position in relation to the text. This is one of the central phenomena that often separate lyric poems from the other two poetic genres discussed here (particularly narrative poems) or from prose texts, in which voice and speech do not nearly have as prominent a role. The uncertain status of the reader is, in its way, deepened by the uncertain status of any *I* in a poem, to the extent that the reader can be thought to be able to identify with it. That a poem does or does not have an explicit *I* does not explain the back-and-forth sliding that takes place between the voice and the eye during reading. Accordingly, there is a difference between such an *I* and the type of poetic (formal) organization that determines the poem's special typographical form, which in turn demands,

challenges, or undermines a particular way of reading it—the last of which, in turn, introduces a tension between statement and utterance.

To elaborate on this, consider the thought that a mood can also be a thematic aspect. While there is no reason to reject the ordinary notion that lyric poems summon a distinctive kind of feeling or affect, explanations of what this feeling or affect *means* are rarely given. To the degree that a poem invokes a particular mood, is its explicit *I* also part of the mood, or is it just a vehicle for it? This question can be answered by means of an example: the anxiety or madness that is evoked in a number of Fernando Pessoa's Caiero (poems is also an anxiety or madness that encompasses these poems' narrating *I*. The *I* is (caught) in the mood, and so cannot control it: it is controlled by it. Again, a distinction must be made between an explicit *I* and the remainder of the poem's organization (which constitutes its mood), to which the *I* is subordinate, or of which it is a part. What is more, the *I* often appears in a linguistic or rhetorical phrase that makes it clear that it *cannot* be responsible for the poem's structure and whole. Instead, such a phrase suggests that the poem is a linguistic event:

The lyric should thus be understood as an event in language. The modern lyric is outside of 'me,' and however personal it seems, the lyric voice is always heard through another's lips: the text, the persona, the unpredictable movement of language itself. (Brewster, 2009, p. 111)

Hence there is no overall *I* responsible for the poem. On the contrary, lyric poems often reflect a depletion or dissolution of the *I* that may appear explicitly in the poem's statements.<sup>17</sup> The *I* is more or less reduced to the locus of what takes place outside the universe of meaning, inasmuch as it

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<sup>17</sup> This point eludes Larsen (2009) when he discusses the Scandinavian tradition of *central-lyrik*, whose ideal was to be "an authentic and authoritative utterance by a suprapersonal, fixed subject as the indisputable center of the poetic universe" (p. 465). But there are hardly any poems with a "suprapersonal, fixed subject." For a thorough critique of such notions about the *centrallyrik* tradition, see Rasmussen (2013, p. 136-145).

is drowned in mysterious words, problematic syntax, “exploded” sentences, etc. The language speaks with itself, so to speak, through or alongside the *I* as it reveals itself in the poem’s statements. This is not because this language articulates a particular view, or encourages a particular interpretation (of itself), but simply because the language makes room for something that takes place outside the *I* and its language. If anything, lyric poetry is the site where language makes room for “speech,” which of course has its origins in language (writing); but this “speech” points to something outside language that cannot be grasped by an *I*. This contributes to determining the affect (mood) that a poem can generate in its readers.

A feature common to every form of communication, meanwhile, is that what we convey is greater or less than what we immediately express. Every form of communication contains lacunae that must be filled in by the receiver. We always tell more or less than we think or wish; but even though that is a universal trait, it is not always something that we are aware of when speaking or writing to others. In lyric poetry, this problem often arises with heightened clarity. And this, no doubt, is one of the explanations for the distinctive affect—*anxiety, rejection, boredom*—that takes hold of readers when they are confronted with this issue. Accordingly, the “narration” that is responsible for the poem in its entirety cannot be identified with the *I* of the poem’s statements; it is rather something that “speaks” beyond, through, and/or alongside the poem’s *I*.

The aforementioned parallel to ordinary speech or writing is obvious here: there is also something that “speaks” alongside, through, or beyond the entity that *appears* responsible for oral statements or written text in general. This becomes clear when a subject suddenly halts in the middle of a conversation, an oral presentation, or a process of writing, or is overwhelmed by something sudden and unexpected. There is something else that insists on, or hinders, the subject’s effort to present what it wishes to say or write. This *something else* is founded on an enunciation that charac-

terizes—or stands in opposition to—the immediate statements of the subject. It is possible to define this entity that “speaks” in and/or beyond the *I* of (lyric) poetry as a *subject of enunciation*, that is, the entity responsible for the totality of enunciation in the poem, even if some of these are attributed to an *I* in the text.

The enunciations within a text partake in a structure that is unique to the given poem. The affect that emerges in reading the poem, moreover, is tied to the relation between the text’s written form and its possible readings, as well as to the split between the subject of the poem’s statements (the *I*) and the subject of enunciation. This coheres with the distinctive features set forth in the text, even if we can pinpoint its particular genre. The lyric enunciation consists in the possibility of presenting subjective speech (e.g., that of an *I*) about something that is presubjective (i.e., prior to an *I*), or which constitutes a subjective non-subjectivity (Rabaté, 1996, p. 72).

### **WHAT IS NAMELESS?**

Such a subjective non-subjectivity lies precisely at the root of the problem, described previously, of the remainder that inscribes itself into lyric poetry and cannot be interpreted. The existence of this remainder does not imply that interpretation should be abandoned, but rather that interpretation must constitute an approximation to what is nameless because it lies beyond language. When it comes to listening to or reading poetry, this also means listening to the *aphonia* (voicelessness) that is an index for what lies beyond names. This paves the way for the surprise that has no significance (meaning). Namely—and as has already been pointed out—a lyric poem not only represents an outer world, and constitutes a distinctive reference to or referent for an external world, but it also, to a great extent, constitutes a reference to *language itself* and its limits. There thereby arises a “representation” or invocation of what cannot be represented or made present (again) in language, but can only be imagined. (This goes a long way to-

ward explaining the enigmatic features of poetry.<sup>18</sup>) Such “representation” constitutes a distinctive “event” in language.

As a result, lyrical poems evoke more than they describe, more than they unfold in detail. They cannot describe what is nameless; they can only evoke it. This does not mean that such an evocation cannot have a distinctive rhetorical form, in which metaphor specifically plays a large role, and metonymy has a special role as well. The poem’s printed page is not merely a site of stanzas and verses, potentially including rhyme and/or enjambments, which flourish with the aid of a distinctive rhetoric. Its blank or white areas (the spaces surrounding the letters, the spaces between the words, verses, stanzas, etc.) follow no metric law (any longer), but form a spatial composition whose white areas constitute a metonymy for what escapes language. That is, they represent a part of what is outside language—not as a whole, but precisely as a part (the meaning of metonymy, after all, is taking a part for a whole): they are a metonymy for what remains foreign to naming, description, and representation, for what cannot be conceptualized in language (Cf. Doumet, 2004, p. 54). By virtue of its white spots and areas, the graphical formatting of lyric poetry contains a metonymy for what escapes language.

It is against this backdrop that the notion (the metaphor) that lyric poetry closes in on itself can be understood. Lyric poems are not merely isolated or complex representations of external reality, though they certainly do refer to it. Most of all, they are “representations” of a (linguistic and non-linguistic) reality that exists only in or by virtue of the poems themselves. They are metonymic invocations of a reality that is (in) the poems themselves. What is more, they invoke this selfsame reality in a strange language that leaves only (for example) a form of rage, tenderness, or rigidity (Doumet, 2004, p. 59) in its wake, violating the linguistic principles or ideals of general communication.

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<sup>18</sup> For one such “representation,” see Rasmussen, 2004.

Accordingly, even if lyric poems may, at first glance, enable identification of or with recognizable linguistic phenomena, they break with these phenomena just as quickly. They bring language to a crisis; or, to use another metaphor, language is turned against itself. They contain a language that reacts against itself, but simultaneously observes or identifies the very act by which it reacts against itself and it slides into “the unknown.”

Talk of the distinctive features of prose, and particularly those of the short story, tends to focus on the occurrence of a key event that bears implications for the people involved in it. A prosaic event, in short, is one that has qualitative consequences for those involved. Although there are a number of recent short prose texts that lack such an event—examples include the short stories of Raymond Carver—the presence of such an event is often used as a definition for use in analyzing such texts. In her *Novellen—struktur, historie og analyse* [The Short Story: Structure, History, and Analysis], Marie Lund Klujeff notes that “even if one cannot point to an absolute and striking event in the story, such an event can well be thematized and present in a minimal version, or simply bear meaning by its very absence” (2008, p. 24).

Within the short story, the point of this narrative event is that it constitutes a confrontation with what is nameless—whether the event is striking, is merely thematized, or given weight by its absence. In this context, we may briefly consider the suicide of the male protagonist in Franz Kafka’s “Das Urteil” [“The Judgment”] (1913), which takes place after the protagonist’s father has sentenced him to death by drowning on account of his sexual interests. After receiving his father’s sentence, the young man throws himself off a bridge. Such narrative prose events are (usually) not present in lyric poems.

This does not mean that what is nameless has no importance in lyrical poetry, but it is not (necessarily) evoked by virtue of the narrative event that is central to the prose. On the contrary, it is evoked by/in language that is directed against itself and its limits. The phenomena that evoke what is

nameless, or that make it possible to imagine it, are simultaneously linguistic phenomena. This is the central paradox of poetry. In this sense, there are two literary events in lyric poems that nonetheless distinguish themselves from prose narration: the event of language; and the event that is linked to what is nameless. These are two events that cannot be separated from each other, as tends to be the case in prose texts where one particular event stands out in a significant way. To read poetry, therefore, is

... to sense the representation's instability; to sense the representation itself as an essentially unstable, labile, and reproductive fact: as the melting pot of the world's fecundity. It is undoubtedly this that maintains us: that the fatality of our mortal condition, given everything that indicates this condition and illustrates it in the silent order of things, can suddenly be revoked and doubted. Dreams of immortality, visitations of the dead, green paradises, memorializations of the bygone life—these are but some of the varied figures in this unique revocation, as it seems to us, that the play of the poetic representation makes room for and sets in motion. (Doumet, 2004, p. 75)

To these dreams of immortality, reunions with the dead, etc., can be added a number of features that constitute thematic aspects of these, precisely by virtue of the instability of representation: sexuality, love, speechlessness, anxiety, bodily discharge, etc.

This does not mean that lyric poems make up an isolated space, but that they unseat the way we normally view the world, including the discourses that prevail in this world, discourses of (for example) political, communicative, sexual, social, ethnic or ideological kinds. When they relate to such discourses, lyric poems problematize and break them down locally while simultaneously introducing what is nameless—which such discourses try to hold at bay, or fill with strange shapes (e.g., the ethnic others, who are the source of all evil).

At the heart of this disruption, however, is not so much that lyric poems dismiss the referential dimension or break down the discourses just described, but that they make room for a new reality. The language of lyric poems makes room for a new reality insofar as what is nameless is evoked. The mood or affect that these poems strike up derives from this opening, this making room. The affect is a reaction to a confrontation with what is nameless: anxiety, boredom (defense), or arousal (enjoyment), just to name a few. To the extent that the poems invoke historical, political, or similar events (e.g., the bombing of Hiroshima), the “memories” that are linked to them are not those of the author, but are the memories of every reader. It is *every* reader’s memory of what is nameless that is inscribed in such events. And it is the great strength of lyric poems that they can activate such memories by means of a distinctive rhetoric, graphical formatting, and form of enunciation, without crossing into a different genre—all while continually calling into question the boundaries between genres.

### SUMMARY

Lyric poetry constitutes a distinctive branch of modern poetry, which also includes narrative and dramatic poetry. The distinguishing mark of lyric poetry is its language, namely, the way in which language emerges as a distinctive area by virtue of, among other things, rhetoric, formal aspects (verse, stanzas, enjambement, etc.), theme, and special puzzles within the text. Such language is not based on narrative (possibly fateful) events or characters (as in dramatic poems), but on language as an event. Although the word “lyric,” by its etymological connection to “lyre,” suggests a certain similarity to songs, in fact the peculiar language of lyric poetry, including the possibility of enjambment, implies the necessity of a distinctive way of reading these poems (which cannot always be read aloud) that takes these aspects into account. This means that lyric poems are stretched taut, at least virtually, between a graphical dimension (writing) that depends on the gaze’s movements across the paper, and a (possible) verbal

dimension that demands reading aloud (speech). These two dimensions cannot be reduced to a simple exchange between speech and writing. Rather, they emphasize that poetry includes more discursive forms than can be attributed to the narrating *I* that may be present in such poems.

To understand such discursive forms, it is necessary to be aware of the sensitive position of the narrating *I* that may appear in lyric poems, much as it is also necessary to try to relate to their riddle, which cannot be grasped or dissolved from a semantic perspective. Instead, the distinctive rhetoric of lyric poems, their possible enjambments and other formal aspects, their themes or their poetic functions (Jacobson), all make room for what is nameless. This is an opening, a making room, that simultaneously constitutes a special “event” in the poems’ language, much as what is nameless can constitute or appear by means of a special “event” in the poems. These events are probably among the most central features that are associated with lyric poetry in our day. They give the reader a sense of why the “representation” of one thing or another, which such poems also contain, is unstable; or why such poems contain such a striking, remarkable language. The last of these is determined by the lyric poem’s distinctive discursive form, distinctive rhetoric, and/or distinctive specification of what is nameless—a specification that is further essential in relation to the themes that such poems also contain.

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