

English.

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REPETITION AND PARALLELISM IN ENGLISH POETRY.

A RECENT book by Dr. Smith, professor of English in the Louisiana State University, is devoted to a treatment of two structural peculiarities of English poetry that have not so far received sufficient recognition in even the most extensive works on English poetics. These structural devices are Repetition and Parallelism. They play so important a part in verse that the new light the author sheds on the subject should not remain hidden.

With the effect of Repetition in prose we are tolerably familiar. It makes essentially for emphasis, as in Freeman's account of the English chronicles:—

"Among the verses from which we draw our knowledge of the times which form the subject of the present history, there are two nations which stand alone. England alone among western nations, alone among nations of either Roman or Teutonic speech, can point to an unbroken history of seven hundred years of the national being recorded in the living speech of the land. We alone can read, etc.

The Parallel Construction, as for instance in the Balanced Sentence, seems to contrast or distinguish the ideas expressed in the phrases or clauses similarly constructed:

"With the personal character of William Rufus we are less concerned than with the political character of his reign. But the character of the man was one which had no small effect on the character of his reign." (Freeman.)

But in poetry Repetition is employed not merely for emphasis but "for melody or rhythm, for continuousness or sonorousness of effect, for unity of impression, for banding lines or stanzas, and for the more indefinable though not less important purposes of suggestion. To illustrate:—

In Poe's lines,

(a)	"And all my days are trances	(a)
(a)	And all my nightly dreams	(b)
(b)	Are where thy dark eye glances	(a)
(b)	And where thy footstep gleams,—	(b)
(c)	In what ethereal dances,	(a)
(c)	By what eternal streams."	(b)

it will be noticed that while the rhymes succeed in the order *ab, ab, ab, ab*, the repetitions set up a second mode of union *aa, bb, cc*. This close union of the lines is still further reinforced by similar constructions:

{	"All, all my days are trances
{	And all my nightly dreams
{	Are where thy dark eye glances
{	And where thy footstep gleams,—
{	In what ethereal dances,
{	By what eternal streams."

The Repetition and Parallelism combine with rime to give that close rhythmical unity that we feel the lines to have.

Successive Repetition is so frequent in the old ballads that it is almost a characteristic.

O say not soe, thou holy friar,
I pray thee, say not soe;
For since my true-love dyed for me,
This meet my tears should flow."
—*Friar of Orders Grey*.

Or with question and answer:

"Tydinges, tydinges, Kyng Estmere!"
'What tydinges now, my boye?'
'O, tydinges I can tell to you,
That will you sore annoye."
—*King Estmere*.

Tennyson imitates this device:

"Why come you dressed like a village maid,
That are the flower of the earth?"
'If I come drest like a village maid,
I am but as my fortunes are."

It is an interesting fact that when poets forego using rime they often unconsciously fall back

on the unifying process of Repetition or Parallelism. So in Lamb's lines:

"I have had playmates, I have had companions,
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.
I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late with my bosom cronies,
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces."

Here not only the refrain of the third lines, but also the constant repetition within each stanza, compensates for the weakened rhythm.

In addition to the use of Repetition as an aid to rhythm comes its use in "suggesting" sameness, unchangeableness, continuousness. Tennyson has availed himself of this device to a marked degree.

"Ship after ship, the whole night long, their high-built galleons came,
Ship after ship, the whole night long, with their battle thunder and flame;
Ship after ship, the whole night long, drew back with her dead and her shame."
—*The Revenge*.

"And never yet hath
This Holy Thing failed from my side, nor come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and day,
Faint by day, but always in the night
Blood-red, and sliding down the blacken'd marsh,
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain top,
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red."
—*The Holy Grail*.

This latter illustration verges close to another use of Repetition, to suggest the quaint and fantastic. Everyone knows the use Poe put this device to in *The Raven*, where throughout the poem the repetitions serve all the moods of the poet—to aid the rhythm, to express monotony and dejection, but above all by the constant use of the refrain "Nevermore" to give a weird, fantastic tone that pervades the poem.

In a special chapter on the poet Swinburne, Dr. Smith classifies some of the modes of Repetition that are met with in the verses of that wonderful melodist. They illustrate in a characteristic way some of the chief varieties of Repetition, and will furnish a natural close to this brief paper.

1. Repetition with added relative clauses:

"Ah, with blind lips I felt for you and found
About my neck your hands and hair enwound,
The hands that stifle and the hair that stings,
I felt them fasten sharply without sound."
—*Laus Veneris*.

2. (a) Repetition in inverse order:

"Laurel is green for a season, and love is sweet for a day;
But love grows bitter with treason, and laurel outlives
not May.

This is beautifully seen likewise in Hood's well-known lines,—

"Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied—
We thought her dying when she slept
And sleeping when she died."

(b) Repetition in pairs of successive words:

I shall sleep, and move with the moving ships,
Change as the winds change, veer in the tide;
My lips will feast on the foam of thy lips,
I shall rise with thy rising, with thee subside.
—*Triumph of Time*.

(c) Alliteration often does duty for Repetition of words:

Loves that are lost ere they come to birth,
Weeds of the wave, without fruit upon earth,
I lose what I long for, save what I can,
My love, my love, and no love for me.
—*Triumph of Time*.

3. The third means of unification is simple repetition of one word throughout the stanza:

"Mother of lives that are swift to fade,
Mother of mutable winds and hours,
A barren mother, a mother-maid,
Cold and clean as her faint salt flowers."
—*Triumph of Time*.

4. Parallelism is as frequent in Swinburne as repetition:

"And wrought with weeping and laughter,
And fashioned with loathing and love,
With life before and after,
And death beneath and above."
—*Chorus in Atalanta in Calydon*.

All these examples represent the two-fold character of Repetition and Parallelism, (1) as a means of producing harmony; (2) as a means of banding separate lines by a sameness of sound and effect. The extent to which these occur in Swinburne justifies us in calling that poet, not the "born tamer of words," as Mr. Stedman has called him, but the "born tamer of sounds."

THE MAY-QUEEN.

M. A. WATT.

I HAD hesitated about giving my class this poem, for it is long and besides is full of suggestions that seem too high and abstract for a class of young boys and girls. But about two weeks ago I gave the order to open at "The May-Queen." When obeyed, I turned to the blackboard and silently wrote the following questions:—

1. Name of poem?
2. Name of author?
3. His home?
4. Is he living or dead? If dead, when did he die?

The common centre of interest thus being fixed, the answers were arranged in neat form (mentally). I received unanimous replies to the first, second and third, but a discussion ensued as to the date of Tennyson's death, some remembered it as '92, another thought '93, and one lad remarked:—"I think it was '92, but I could easily find out, to-night," and the matter was left there, to the satisfaction of the class.

They were interested to hear that Tennyson was the Queen's Poet or Poet Laureate and that he had received a title from her. They mentioned some other poems they knew to be his.

"Now," I said, "look at your books, and I shall ask Libbie to read the 'First Reading' very plainly, so as to make us see the meaning clearly. You will all be thinking of the story and trying to see it in your mind's eye." So Libbie read the "First Reading" through, every eye bent on the book.

"Turn over now to the 'Second Reading' " was the next command. No urging was needed, the leaves rustled hastily. Everyone read silently and eagerly. Choosing a reliable volunteer to read, we went through the second part, then turned to the "Third Reading" and went through it in like manner. The pictures I saw were being examined.

When we had finished, I did not let their minds go to the story. I felt they could form very little idea of it yet, and I remarked on the beauty of the construction of the poem, its smooth and elegant arrangement of words and said:—

"That is fine writing, I wish I could write a composition like that, wouldn't you like to be able to write one like it, boys and girls?"

"Did he make it all up himself? Just write it out of his own head?" was the unexpected question of a surprised looking boy. I assured him that such was the case, that Mr. Tennyson composed it about this girl, whether he knew her, or heard of her, or imagined her was not material, he wrote it himself, did not read it anywhere else, and further pointed out the self-evident fact (to me) that poems must originate with some person. I told them that the more they read good writings the better they would compose themselves.

Our next reading was for the purpose of seeing the beauty of the word-arrangement, and by varying the motive for reading the poem, we secured a repetition of it, until the children became familiar with it and then the story was examined. The class still turned to it with pleasure, to my surprise, after the fourth day's reading of it.

"Each person will choose out a stanza to read. Let it be the one you think the best of all."

The poem was searched from end to end, time being allowed. The selections were suggestive to a student of human nature.

"There's many a black, black eye, they say,
But none so bright as mine,
There's Margaret and Mary, there's Kate and Caroline;
But none so fair as little Alice, in all the land they say,
So I'm to be Queen o' the May, Mother, I'm to be Queen o' the May"

received the admiration of a small boy who rolled out the words with delight in their sound,