Principles of Prosody

Concepts

Binding In Russom's terminology, the effect of a formal pattern tying a sequence of lines together

Bracketing mismatch A situation in which the boundaries of metrical feet do not coincide with word boundaries, e.g. when trochaic words are used in iambic metres.

Chunking constraint A limit to how much complex material the mind can comfortably process (specifically, hold in "rehearsal memory") at a time

Complexity The degree to which a work of poetry diverges from ("mismatches") aspects of the more straightforward metrical pattern to which it generally adheres

Frequency In Russom's terminology, the repetition of a formal feature either in a specified location (e.g. at the start of a line) or in close proximity

Heavy by position When a syllable is identified as heavy due to the presence of one or more consonants in the coda, even though the nucleus is lax (or short)

Introductory principle A tendency towards limited formal complexity at the beginning of a metrical unit

Major syllabic break The boundary within a syllable between the onset and the rhyme

Major syntactic break The boundary between important syntactic subconstituents, such as a preposition and the noun phrase it governs

Minor syntactic break The boundary between two closely associated words within a single phrase, e.g. between article and noun

Poetic domain In Russom's terminology, a poetic sequence within which a given formal pattern occurs, such as a stanza

Principle of closure "A tendency towards stricter adherence to metrical norms at the end of a metrical unit such as a line, a stanza, or a whole work" (Russom, *Evolution* 17, citing Hayes, "English Meter" 373)

Proximity The nearby succession of a formal feature

Specified location The place (in the line) where a formal feature occurs by expectation

Universal word constraint A universal rule asserting that the average number of words per line in poetry from any tradition does not exceed nine and rarely drops below five (Russom cites Hogan, "Literary Universals" 241)