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Rhyme in the Languages and Cultures of the World

An Introduction

Rhyme is found in verbal arts throughout the world. In the appendix to this introduction, we offer a partial list of languages whose associated verbal arts sometimes have rhyme.

Rhyme is most commonly found in texts which are poems, including sung poems (songs). Poems are defined as texts which are divided into lines, where lines are a sectioning imposed on the oral or written text which is distinct from the syntactic and prosodic structure (Fabb 2015). However, there are also examples of rhyme used in prose, for example in Latin and Greek (McKie 1997), and Arabic (Fabb 2015 citing Beeston 1983). It is common for rhyme to be found specifically in metrical poems, these being poems whose lines are measured by counting out the elements which comprise them. But rap songs may have nonmetrical lines and nevertheless have rhyme. Where rhyme is found it can be systematic, in the sense that it is possible to predict that a rhyme will appear in a particular place, which is often at the end of the line, but sometimes line-internal. Rhyme can also be non-systematic or emergent or ‘sporadic’ (Tartakovsky 2014; 2021). And there are intermediate cases where rhyme is both frequent and fairly predictable, but not entirely predictable. The distinction between systematic forms which arise across many texts and non-systematic forms which might arise in one text only is generally important in literature, and particularly in literary criticism which has a particular interest in non-systematic forms and their relation to meaning; it is the distinction which Klima and Bellugi (1976: 57) call ‘Conventional form’ vs. ‘Individual form’. Finally, if we count as ‘verbal art’ word-games and invented words, for example reduplicative words such as ‘hurly burly’ (Sherzer 2002; Minkova 2002) then we might find rhyme as an everyday type of verbal art in the language outside poetry, and indeed in this extended sense rhyme may be found everywhere in the world.

Are there languages in which the verbal arts entirely lack rhyme? The entry for Rhyme in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* thinks so: ‘it is a thundering fact that most of the world’s 4,000 languages lack or avoid rhyme in their poetries altogether’ (Brogan & Cushman 2012: 1182). We are less certain about this, and take the view that the most we can say is that for a specific language, we know of no description of its verbal art that it has rhyme. Sometimes an exhaustive analysis of a literature explicitly says

that there is no rhyme, so for example Dell and Elmedlaoui (2008: 61) say that ‘rhyming is unknown in traditional Tashlhiyt Berber singing’. But it is always possible that for some language, rhyme might have existed in a now-lost oral form, or it might exist in an unnoticed children’s verbal art, or in a poetic form such as the sonnet imported into a language whose literature previously had no rhyme, or in contemporary verbal arts such as rap.

Rap is now an important place for rhyme in many languages whose literatures traditionally do not have rhyme. For example, Korean and Japanese are languages whose known traditional literatures are described as not having rhyme, but rhyme is used in Korean rap songs (Park 2016) and Japanese rap songs (Kawahara 2007; Manabe 2006). Analogous examples of languages where perhaps it is only rap and related genres which have rhyme include, from Central and South America, Tz’utujil-Mayan (Bell 2017), Yucatec Mayan (Cru 2017), Qom (Beiras del Carril & Cúneo 2020), Aymara (Swinehart 2019), and the Quechua songs of Renata Flores or Liberato Kani. We know of examples from Africa including Akan (Shipley 2009), Rhonga (Rantala 2016), and Guinea-Bissau Creole (Lupati 2016). We suspect that there are many more languages whose rap traditions differ from traditional songs and poetry in having rhyme. (The papers we have cited often do not specifically comment on rhyme, but rhyme is clear in the quoted examples, sometimes involving words from two languages.) We note that there is a tension in our discussion between talking about the language as ‘having rhyme’ in its verbal arts, and the individual composers who are responsible for using rhyme, and indeed may be unusual or innovative in using rhyme: the individual uses rhyme but the tradition does not. We focus however on the general here, and assume that if one author is able to use rhyme in the language, then it is a possibility in the verbal art more generally.

Children’s verbal art sometimes has distinctively different characteristics from the adult verbal art in a culture (Campbell 1991). It is possible that children’s songs have poetic characteristics not found in the adult verbal art of the same culture. For example, Brăiloiu (1984) and Burling (1966) thought that there was a universal type of rhythmic structure in children’s song. (However this is probably not correct, as noted in research summarized in Fabb 2015: 118–120.) We might ask whether children’s songs have rhymes in cultures where the adult verse lacks rhyme. In fact, data on this is hard to find, and we do not know of any general surveys of rhyme in children’s song, or of specific instances of clearly rhyming children’s songs in these otherwise rhymeless traditions; for now we treat this as an open question. There is one specific point to make about rhyme in children’s songs, which is that counting rhymes show an interesting function for rhyme, partly because nonsense words are more freely used in children’s songs. This relates to the use of rhyme in counting-out games (Marsh 2008), where each word identifies a different individual in a circle of children, such that the final individual is identified by the final rhyme: an English example begins ‘eeny meeny miney more / put the baby on the floor’.

While noting hesitations about what we may not know, we now nevertheless make some area-based generalizations about rhyme. European and Western and Northern Asian verbal arts often have rhyme, at least from

the mediaeval period onward, though their older verbal arts as preserved in the written tradition do not, except sporadically (Reynolds, this volume). Colonialism and emigration brought these rhyming traditions into other parts of the world such as the Americas. Verbal arts which have been influenced by Islam often have rhyme: Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Urdu, Swahili, Hausa – but notably not Somali which has alliteration instead of rhyme. Northern Indian verbal arts tend to have rhyme; some Southern Indian verbal arts have a distinctive use of rhyme on the second syllable of the line. South East Asian verbal arts often have rhyme, with ‘hook rhyme’ a particular areal characteristic, in which the same line can include both an internal syllable rhyming back into the previous line and a final syllable rhyming forwards into the next line. Chinese verbal art has rhyme, but traditional Korean and Japanese verbal arts do not. Where Pacific verbal arts have rhyme, it tends to involve only the vowels. Rhyme appears in some songs in Central Australian languages. The editors of this volume know about only a few of the large number of verbal art traditions of Papua New Guinea, but none of these few have rhyme. Many African languages have verbal arts which appear to lack rhyme, but rhyme is found in traditional poetries in African Arabic poetry, in Ethiopian poetry, in some Berber poetry, in Hausa, Swahili, and others (sometimes as a result of the influence of Arabic poetry). Perhaps the most striking gap is that we know of almost no accounts of rhyme in the indigenous languages of the Americas, outside of rap; however, we know of unpublished proposals that there is rhyme in some traditions, and Prieto Mendoza (in prep) argues that there is rhyme and alliteration in songs in the Amazonian language Kakataibo.

Verbal arts which do not have rhyme may nevertheless have formal devices which are like rhyme. For example, Yoruba is generally considered not to have rhyme, but Babalola (1966) argues that there is deliberate line-final tonal dissonance, which is a kind of anti-rhyme based on tone. Javanese *matjapat* songs fix which vowels have to come at the end of specific lines in the stanza, depending on genre (Fabb 2015 citing Kartomi 1973). In Hawaiian, final rhyme is usually avoided, but there is repetition of a word or word-part from line end to next line beginning, called ‘linked assonance’ by Elbert and Mahoe (1970). Black (1988) says that ‘[a]lthough neither Sumerian nor Akkadian verse is based on rhyme, it can be shown that comparable effects were sometimes exploited.’ Indigenous peoples of the northern Russia and Siberia do not have rhyme in their poetry, but for example the Nenets researched by Niemi (1998; Niemi & Lapsui 2004) add a song syllable ‘*ngey*’ in the ends of the lines of their narrative poems thus producing a kind of pseudo-rhyme. Klima and Bellugi (1976: 63) discuss the literary linguistic forms of American Sign Language (ASL) poetry or ‘art-sign’, in which there is no exact equivalent to rhyme, but where there are similar kinds of signed form such as shared handshape similarity, noting that this ‘patterning of linguistic forms in art-sign is by-and-large Individual rather than Conventional.’

Why Do We Have Typologies of Rhyme, and Other Kinds of Poetic Form?

Rhyme is one of the verbal art forms which are often divided into subkinds or types; that is, it is subject to typologies (or taxonomies, the term preferred in the *Princeton Encyclopedia*). In this section, we consider some reasons for formulating a typology of rhyme or of any type of verbal art form.

One way to think about rhyme typologically is to fit it into a formal hierarchy. As part of a larger hierarchy which contains it, rhyme can be considered a type of sound patterning along with alliteration and possibly other types of sound patterning, which are differentiated by which parts of the word they involve. Sound patterning in turn can be considered a type of parallelism (as Jakobson 1960 claims) in which similar linguistic elements are distributed relatively close to one another in a text. Rhyme can be classified by its own internal hierarchy and can itself be divided into types. Relevant criteria include prosodic prominence (e.g., whether a syllable is stressed), whether the rhyme involves just the final syllable, whether the sounds must be identical, and if nonidentity is allowed what kind of nonidentity (including where vowels are similar but consonants unrelated), whether homophonous but nonidentical words rhyme, whether homophonous but nonidentical suffixes rhyme ('grammatical rhyme', e.g., Opara 2015), whether words are visually similar (eye-rhyme), and so on.

There are various motivations for dividing poetic form into types.

First, the poetic tradition may have its own authorial poetics, where the division of sound-patterns into types is adhered to by authors as part of the rules for composition. For example, alliteration is systematically deployed in Old English metres, and as another example, rhyme is a form systematically deployed in English sonnets. These reflect an 'authorial typology'. Another example can be found in the different named kinds of rhyme which are explicit in mediaeval Irish poetics, where for example rhyme between stressed and unstressed syllables is used in the *deibhidhe* genre of poetry (Knott 1994). The authorial practice may be fully explicit, such that the authors can describe what they do, with a terminology, as is true for the Irish poets. Or it may be implicit but still adhered to as a systematic practice. There are no limits in principle on authorial typologies, and indeed an author can invent a new formal system for each text, as is the practice of some avant-garde writers, such as those in the Oulipo group (Mathews and Brotchie 2005).

Second, the literary critic may divide the form into types in order to produce a critical poetics, and then apply this in a close reading of the text, or in a stylistic analysis, perhaps claiming that each specific type of form has a specific function, such as expressing or supporting a meaning, or producing some response in the reader or listener. This is a 'critical typology', and it need not correspond to the authorial typology. There are no limits in principle on critical typologies. Critical typologies of rhyme can have a large number of types. An example of a large critical typology is presented by Harmon (1987).

A third type we might call a 'convenience typology', which is where we assign types to kinds of poetic form as a shorthand way of referring to them.

So for example instead of saying ‘rhymes which share the same vowels but end in different consonants’ we might say ‘nonidentical rhymes’, thus creating a type without necessarily wanting to make any particular theoretical claim that these are in any important way different from rhymes which share the same vowels and end in the same consonants.

Literary linguists find a fourth reason to divide poetic form into types. This is in order to explain and predict how poetic forms are deployed, and we might call this a ‘theoretical typology’. Theoretical typologies have to be justified, and are likely to be small, given general principles of theoretical parsimony. A theoretical typology captures generalizations, where a specific type manifests two or more generalizations at the same time; these generalizations can be absolute, or statistically significant. For example, we can justify a distinction between alliteration and rhyme because they are used in quite different ways, and have different characteristics. The first characteristic is that alliteration is more local than rhyme and the second characteristic is that alliteration does not generally involve intersecting patterns such as abab (Fabb 1999, and Fabb this volume): these two differences converge on the same partitioning of sound patternings, and so justify the theoretical typological distinction between ‘alliteration’ and ‘rhyme’.

Theoretical typologies are hard to establish. For example, despite their being given different names, it is less easy to theoretically justify a distinction between (i) a ‘full rhyme’ in which vowel and final consonants are involved and (ii) a rhyme in which just the vowel is involved, this being a type of rhyme sometimes called specifically ‘assonance’. For a theoretical typology, the distinction between full rhyme and assonance is justifiable only if it can be used to form a generalization which cannot otherwise be made. For example, if a genre has stanzas in which all rhymes but the last are full rhymes and the last is assonance, then this would justify the typological distinction, because we could use the difference between the types to formulate a generalization. It would also be justified to create this typology to distinguish a genre in which there is only ever full rhyme and another genre in which there is only ever assonance. And the typological distinction would be justified if we found that full rhyme was capable of rhyme patterns (e.g., abcabc) which assonance was not capable of. If however the distribution of assonance vs. full rhyme were not subject to any further generalization, then it is not clear that the typological distinction is justified, as part of a theoretical typology. The distinction between assonance and rhyme might therefore exist in a critical typology (and indeed it is used in many critical typologies), but not in the theoretical typology.

As another example, consider the distinction constituted by (i) rhyme between words which have final stress, or ‘masculine’ rhymes, and (ii) rhyme between words with penultimate stress, or ‘feminine’ rhymes, a distinction investigated by Tsur (2013). This distinction clearly exists in authorial typologies, as noted earlier. But for this distinction to be part of a theoretical typology, it would be necessary to show that some further generalization can thereby be captured; for example, we might find that masculine rhymes more easily allow mismatched vowels than do feminine rhymes (this is invented to give the example; we do not know if this is true or not). If we could show

this then we would be moving towards a theoretical justification for the distinction between masculine and feminine rhyme.

Theoretical typologies usually demand some deeper explanation, perhaps in terms of psychological aspects of linguistic form. One of the implications of theoretical typology is that it might help explain why a particular form is used in a particular language. This hypothesis that the forms of the language particularly enable specific literary forms is called ‘the development hypothesis’ by Fabb (2010), and discussed in the next section.

Linguistics and Rhyme

Theoretical linguists have focused on two questions about rhyme. The first is to what extent rhyme depends on the language having certain characteristics. The second is whether linguistic form can play a role in allowing nonidentical rhyme, between certain sequences of sounds which are not on the surface identical but might have some deeper linguistic similarity.

There is a widespread view that a language offers ‘affordances’ which make rhyme, or a particular kind of rhyme, possible in its verbal arts, and that languages differ in their affordances. Fabb (2010) calls this ‘the development hypothesis’ (but does not endorse it – in fact his article argues that it may sometimes be true but not always).

The Development Hypothesis: Literary language is governed only by rules and constraints which are available to ordinary language, and which refer only to representations which are present (at some stage in a derivation) in ordinary language. (Fabb 2012: 1220.)

A version of the development hypothesis is stated by Sapir in his 1921 book *Language*:

Study carefully the phonetic system of a language, above all its dynamic features [prosody], and you can tell what kind of a verse it has developed – or, if history has played pranks with its psychology, what kind of verse it should have developed and some day will. (Sapir 1967.)

The development hypothesis can take various forms when it comes to rhyme.

One manifestation of the development hypothesis is the view that the possibility of rhyme depends on the language having words with stress, such that the rhyme includes a stressed syllable. One of the major reasons for this claim relates to the correlational observation that when the Latin language developed word stress, so rhyme appeared in Latin verse. However, this correlation does not always hold: Indonesian is a ‘stressless language’ (Athanasopoulou et al. 2021), but it does have rhyme in the poetry, in traditional *pantun* and in modern sonnets, for example.

Arguments in the mode of the development hypothesis sometimes correlate a distinction between the linguistic forms of two languages and the poetic forms of the same two languages. One such argument is presented

by Kentner (2017), who compares reduplication processes in French and Italian against German, and suggests that this correlates with differences in whether the poetries respectively allow rhyme between identical words or not. Wagner and McCurdy (2010) explore another reason why rhymes between identical-sounding words are allowed in French but not in English, based on differences in prosody and information structure.

A second manifestation of the development hypothesis is the view that the vocabulary of a language can make certain kinds of rhyme more easy, or less easy. For example, if there are a limited number of ways in which words can end, perhaps because there are fewer available vowels, then this might have an effect on whether rhyme is used and what kind of rhyme is used. Barbara Reynolds (2000) discusses a version of this argument which has often been made about translations from Italian into English of Dante's *Divine Comedy*. The original text's triplets have *terza rima* rhyme as aba, bcb, cdc, and it is sometimes claimed to be difficult to reproduce in English because it is said to be harder to repeatedly find three words which rhyme together. But, Reynolds notes, '[t]his statement continues to be made, though it can easily be disproved'. It is worth noting that the development hypothesis also makes a possibly incorrect assumption about aesthetics, which is that a verbal art should be constrained so that it is easy to produce poetry relative to the resources of the language. But we should also remember that verbal arts often gain their value by their difficulty, and by the skill of the composer in overcoming those difficulties. Sapir's view that literature should be fitted to language is opposed to the view developed at the same time (in the early 20th century) by the Russian formalists that literature is a difficult rule-breaking practice (Hanson and Fabb 2022).

The development hypothesis is attractive in part because it appeals to the notion of a 'national literature', a literature particularly suited to the nation and to the language which is attributed to that nation. However, the weakness of any claim based on the development hypothesis is that it is usually based on correlating aspects of language and literature either within a single language, or within a small group of languages. There are (to our knowledge) no big typological accounts of the characteristics of all the verbal arts in a large number of languages, which might allow more widely justified generalizations to be formed about how aspects of language correlate with aspects of verbal art. Sapir was overconfident about this, in the absence of extensive supporting evidence. In the appendix to this introduction we list all the languages which we think probably have rhyme in their verbal arts, but it is worth noting that what evidence we could find is in some cases quite thin and indirect. We think there is no full version of this type of list.

The other main way in which theoretical linguists have taken an interest in rhyme relates to nonidentical rhymes, rhymes which involve an inexact match of speech sounds. Nonidentity is an interesting phenomenon in many aesthetic practices, where small amounts of nonidentity are accepted and indeed may be favoured over identity, but where a larger amount of nonidentity is forbidden. In music, for example, there are 'participatory discrepancies' (Keil 1987) where different performers can be slightly out of time or pitch with one another, but not too far out of time or pitch; exactly

where the threshold lies is worth exploring. In the study of rhyme this is illustrated by Zwicky's (1976) argument that in rock lyrics, two nonidentical words such as 'rock' and 'fop' can rhyme if they differ in one phonological feature such as place of articulation: here, both final consonants are voiceless plosives, differing in place of articulation as velar and bilabial. But words in this tradition cannot rhyme if they differ in two phonological features such as both place and voicing as in the illegitimate rhyme 'rock' and 'fob', where the final consonants are plosives, but differ in two ways: in voicing and in place of articulation. In other cases it may be that the underlying sound-structure of a word, before various phonological alterations have occurred, is the basis of the rhyme. Fabb (1997) discusses some of the ways in which linguists have characterised the limits on difference in nonidentical rhymes, and for further discussion of the linguistics of nonidentity in rhyme, see Kiparsky (1981[1973]), Worth (1977), Malone (1982; 1988a; 1988b), Holtman (1996), Steriade (2003), Kawahara (2007), Jefferson et al. (2014) and van der Schelde (2020). It is worth noting that the notion of intermediate levels of complexity in rhyme parallels the idea in psychological aesthetics, in Wundt (1874) and Berlyne (1971) for example, that aesthetic pleasure depends on intermediate levels of complexity.

Psychology and Rhyme

Psychologists have long been interested in rhyme, because as a sequential relationship between related words it can tell us things about memory and other aspects of our psychology. Much of this work has involved lists of words, often invented words, where some words rhyme with other words. Relatively little of this experimental work has involved poetry, and a great deal of caution is needed when carrying over findings from word lists to making speculations about poetry, a point made by Rubin and Wallace (1989). Some of this research is discussed in Fabb, this volume, and also summarized in Fabb (2015).

Rubin (1995) argues that rhyme makes poems easier to remember, and this has been one of the major issues in the psychology of verbal art. Another major issue relates to fluency effects: when a text is processed more fluently (e.g., words are recognized more quickly), all kinds of side-effects can arise, such as the text being liked more, or its being considered more true; this is explored as an effect of rhyme by Obermeier et al. (2016). Knoop et al. (2019) explore both linguistic and psychological aspects of nonidentical rhymes (called 'imperfect' in their article), including issues relating to the order of words within a rhyme. The extent to which systematic rhyme in a poem leads to expectations which can be satisfied or disappointed is explored by Scheepers et al. (2016).

Much of the psychological work on rhyme has looked at what the relation between rhyming words can tell us about word recall, and access to the mental lexicon, and is not specifically focused on poetry. For example it is possible to test whether a word X makes a word Y more easily retrieved from memory when the two words rhyme (i.e., 'priming' experiments), and

this illuminates the relation between words as they are stored in memory (e.g., Dufour and Peereman 2012, or Allopenna et al. 1998 for an experiment using eye-tracking). Dautriche et al. (2017) look at how similar sounding words can be confused by a listener; they find that there are many factors, such as the fact that nouns are more likely to be confused with other similar-sounding nouns than with similar-sounding verbs (Dautriche et al. 2017: 137). These are findings which might be carried over to look at what kinds of words tend to rhyme with what others. Creel et al. (2006) pairs invented words with a CVCV structure, and finds that words which share the same consonants are more easily confused than words which share the same vowels, an interesting finding given that this loosely correlates with the alliteration-rhyme distinction, but needs to be tested in the context of poetry. The last two of these psychological experiments look at the confusability between pairs of words which in principle would seem to be a bad thing; but it is not clear exactly what we would expect when looking for similar patterns in poetry, which needs in different ways to be both easy and hard, as noted above.

Other studies ask whether words which rhyme are for that reason processed in a specific area of the brain (e.g., Khateb et al. 2007), and have looked at how rhymes are processed in silent reading (Chen et al. 2016). Though this work tends not to be specifically on poetry, there are implications for the study of poetry, as Rapp and Samuel (2002) note.

Fabb (2015) presents an account of the relation between various kinds of poetic form, including rhyme, and working memory, drawing specifically on the systems approach to working memory of Baddeley (2012). Fabb (2015: 26, 172, 184) defines a poem (spoken or written) as follows:

A poem is a text made of language, divided into sections which are not determined by syntactic or prosodic structure.

This definition is put to use in the following hypothesis:

A poetic section on which systematic added forms depend must be able to fit as a whole unit into the episodic buffer in working memory.

This applies to systematic rhyme, rhyme whose presence and location can be predicted in the text. The simplest example of this is a text which always has line-final rhyme; but other kinds of line-internal rhyme can be predicted. The hypothesis specifically applies to the rule which locates the rhyme relative to a section of text, and requires that the section of text be short enough to fit as a whole into working memory. For comparison, about sixteen words of syntactically coherent English speech can fit into working memory. This generally means that it should be possible to require a rhyme to be located relative to short sections such as a line or couplet. But there is a specific prediction that rhyme should not be located relative to a long section such as a quatrain: that is, we would not expect to find a type of verbal art in which a rhyme occurs only at the end of every four lines. This is quite a loose prediction, and it depends on negative evidence; the positive evidence Fabb

presents in his book is that a large number of rhyming traditions in fact locate the rhyme relative to the shorter sections of line, long line or couplet. Fabb distinguishes between two aspects of rhyme: the location of the rhyming word relative to the constituency of the text vs. the pattern of rhymes (such as abab or abcbca etc). He makes no prediction about rhyme patterns and suggests that the distance between two words which rhyme is not limited by working memory.

As a final comment on psychology and rhyme we note that there has been research on young children's general sensitivity to rhyme, which is relevant here because this has a bearing on the distribution of rhyme in the world's verbal art. There has been experimental work in this area, though often – as usually in psychological studies – it is on rhyme in word lists rather than in poetry or song. The experimental evidence in general has sometimes suggested that very young children process alliteration more readily than rhyme in word lists: '9-month-olds are sensitive to shared features that occur at the beginnings, but not at the ends of syllables' (Jusczyk et al. 1999: 62, who also note how frequently alliteration appears in young children's word play). On the other hand, Hahn et al. (2018) offer evidence that very young children can also detect rhymes. All the work we know on children's songs which rhyme is in cultures which also have adult traditions with rhyme (e.g., English, Dutch, etc.). This means that we cannot be sure what role prior familiarity with rhyme may have in making children aware of rhyme; for example Hahn et al.'s (2018) study of Dutch 9-month olds showed that they were able to discriminate rhymes, but also that they already had vast experience with rhymes in the songs they had been exposed to.

Literary Criticism and Rhyme

One of the disciplinary locations for the analysis of rhyme is in literary criticism, both in the evaluative criticism in newspapers and other outlets, and in the historical and theoretical approach taken in literature departments. In this brief section we summarize some of the driving principles of much literary critical work as it pertains to rhyme; some of these principles can be seen in operation also in chapters of the present book.

Literary criticism focuses on individual authors, in their historical context, and on the traditions formed by those authors. For example, McDonald (2012) offers a reading of rhyme in the work of nineteenth century British poets; Small (1990) explores Emily Dickinson's use of rhyme; Caplan (2017) is an anthology of essays on rhyme in mostly English language poetry from critical, stylistic and historical perspectives; Tartakovsky (2021) discusses rhyme in free verse. This focus on the individual author in turn relates to the role of evaluation in literary criticism, and the practice of close reading to identify local authorial stylistic choices and their consequences.

Evaluation is important in literary criticism. On the one hand, critics may look at how writers were evaluated in their own context, and on the other hand, critics may evaluate poems in how they function for us as readers now. Consider for example the rhyming practices of John Keats

(English, 1795–1821), particularly in the *Poems* of 1817 and in *Endymion* (1818, in rhyming couplets). Keach (1986) and McDonald (2012) are two critics who examine early nineteenth century Tory (right-wing) attacks on Keats's looseness in rhyme by associating it with his looseness (liberalism) of politics: 'the Cockney school of versification, morality, and politics' (Keach 1986: 183 quoting a contemporary review). Keats's looseness is in his allowing enjambment across the boundaries of the rhyming couplet, in opposition to Pope and other writers of the previous century. There is also a claimed looseness (and in this interpretation, a low value) in how the rhymes drive the poetry: 'He seems to us to write a line at random, and then he follows not the thought excited by this line, but that suggested by the rhyme with which it concludes' (McDonald 2012: 118 also quoting a contemporary critic). In their literary critical accounts, Keach and McDonald attempt to understand the contemporary debate and Keats's intentions, look for causal factors in the writing of the poetry, and to some extent also evaluate the quality of the poetry. Thus for example Keach argues that the need to find a rhyme may combine with other driving forces, in a productive aesthetic practice which draws on 'the stylistic instincts encouraged and shaped by that context' (Keach 1986: 196).

A second major theme in literary criticism is to characterise the forms of the text, often at a granular level. Many of the chapters in the present book look at the stable aspects of rhyming traditions, where a type of rhyme is used in the same way across a large number of texts. Stable forms are most interesting to literary critics not because of their generality (which in contrast interests linguists) but because of the opportunities that stable forms offer for combining meanings in formal pairings, for example by looking at how the fact of couplet end rhyme can pair two words whose meanings can be productive in combination. Literary critics also focus on the non-systematic forms which depend not on pre-existing principles of writing but almost entirely on authorial choice. This approach places no limits in principle on what counts as a form, since these forms are emergent, based on the identification of some repetition. In the case of rhyme, this might mean looking for repetitions of vowels and final consonants apart from the stable line-final rhyme system. Here is an example from McDonald (2012: 116), reading Keats:

the insistent, almost too-obvious internal rhyme [...] "To toll me back from thee from my sole self" [...] has behind it another almost immediate sounding of verbal likeness, in 'bell' and 'toll' while it contains also a secondary internal rhyme on 'me' and 'thee'. Even between 'bell' and 'self', the distinction in rhyme consists in no more than a single letter.

In this mode of close reading of (in principle) every part of the text, the forms are described and then sometimes evaluated; sometimes either effects on the reader are claimed, or non-coded 'stylistic' meanings are proposed as produced by the forms (presumably by implicature). As the quoted passage indicates, literary critical accounts of form are often improvisatory, choosing and varying the level of focus on the text in order to find material to which

effects and meaning can be attributed; and in some cases, the entire text is treated as a collection of formal choices each of which can be meaningful or have some other effect. The literary critics characteristically draw on their own intuitions in these evaluations and attributions, and assert their own authority as an expert reader.

Rhyme in Oral Poetry

Analysis of literary poetry typically expects rhyme to serve semantic ends in addition to its structural and rhythmic roles. In contrast, rhyme in oral poetry is often understood chiefly as a device helping the retrieval of lines and sections from memory. This is provably a significant aspect of rhyme in many genres of orally performed memorized songs and poems (Rubin 1996). Wider perspectives in oral poetry (e.g., Bauman 1977: 18–19) note that poetic devices such as rhyme can either work to enhance memory or to show skills in the successful composition of novel utterances by deploying these conventions; this is especially the case in lyrical improvisation. Finally, as suggested by Sykäri (2011: 75–78; 2017), if we listen carefully to the practitioners, we need at least a threefold division to approaching the basic cognitive and aesthetic processes in the creation and performance of oral ‘text’.

First, there is ‘pure’ memorization, that is, rendition of a memorized text. This rendition can be close to verbatim or include changes caused by the recall process. In an oral culture such an aim may be inscribed in the genre, for example ritual songs, or related to the singers’ capacity to only perform memorized songs and not to produce new verses. The second category would be that of oral composition based on verse materials, motifs, and/or story lines that are known in the community, but the use of which in each performance varies. As described by Lord (2000 [1960]), traditional formulas and formulaic structures, recurrent themes and story lines, as well as artistic and situation-sensitive variation, are characteristic of the epic composition-in-performance which he and Milman Parry researched. The means of oral composition can vary largely in different epic traditions, yet the epic performers’ goal in versification is the same: to deliver a traditional story (see Reynolds in this volume, see also e.g. Reichl 2020; 2022). This category is already large and varied, and between it and the third category several genres, such as laments and praise songs, employ traditional formulaic language to create personalized, situation-sensitive entities. A third category is what oral singers themselves refer to as improvisation or extemporization and, in the divergence of the latter, the explicit aim of the performer is to create new, situation-sensitive images and messages. These are transformed to conform to the conventions of the respective poetic language, register, genre, and adapted to the on-going performance event. Such genres are typically argumentative, dialogic, and socially interactive: short genres (couplets, quatrains, quintets, etc.), contest poetry and its current recreational variants, mocking songs, or longer situational compositions. In contemporary cultures of lyrical improvisation, end rhyme is emblematic of

poetic languages employed, and its significance is major both as a difficulty for the beginner and a creative tool for the experienced performer.

Rhymes in oral poetry are sometimes referred to as being ‘mere assonance’. With regard to the orally produced, transmitted, and performed poetry, it is however important to note the following things: first, as oral poetry is chiefly performed by singing, or rhythmically reciting, the sound similarity does not need to be very explicit in order to be understood as such. The musical performance, melody and rhythm, co-creates the experience and the performer can stress desired sounds effectively. This is why a too pervasive identity is often employed and perceived as comic, for example as parody. Second, when the genre characterized by end rhyme is wholly or partly intended for improvisation, it must allow a large variety of words to appear at the ends of the lines in order to allow witty and surprising rhymes. Lyrical improvisers use both textual and musical processing to simultaneously create semantically new and meaningful utterances and sound-patterned lines. Recent experimental evidence indicates that experienced freestyle rappers judge the quality and acceptability of nonidentical rhymes with both left and right brain hemispheres, these being responsible for musical and linguistic processing, correspondingly, while non-experts judge them only with linguistic processing (Cross 2017; Cross & Fujioka 2019). Oral production and aural reception thus deploy multiple channels for coding and decoding poetic utterances, which may at least partly contrast with reading a text on paper. Finally, oral poetry and its imposed poetic forms may develop in close interaction with the given language (fitting the ‘development hypothesis’ described above). When stating his preference of speaking of song meter rather than poetic meter in oral song, Finnish musician and musicologist, professor Heikki Laitinen (2003: 208–209) also comments on the question of restrictions and allowances in meter. He takes up the claim made by Finnish linguist Pentti Leino (1982: 314, note 5) that ‘in song the language system’s restrictions are broken much more freely than in other poetry’. Laitinen argues that from the song meter researcher’s point of view, song meter is not more free, but literary poetry has more restrictions: because the meter of written poetry also has to be *seen*, it needs more restrictions than oral. Any typology or definition of the type of rhymes used in oral poetry should therefore see established oral forms as primary, and the literary forms of that same culture as secondary, to the phenomenon under focus.

This does not mean that such authorial typologies as explained above would not exist in oral cultures, or between a group of oral performers. In his comprehensive ‘Theory of poetic improvisation’ (*Teoría de la Improvisación Poética*, in Spanish), Cuban improviser and author Alexis Díaz-Pimienta (2014: 445–467) explains how the contemporary Cuban community of *repentistas*, lyrical improvisers, discard assonance as a serious fault in the ten-line *décima* (rhymed abba-ac-cddc) and opt for identical rhyme (in Spanish referred to as consonance) even to the detriment of better choices with respect to the content. In general, Díaz-Pimienta argues that recent generations search for literary values in the composition of improvised oral poetry in a way unknown to their predecessors; this is due to professionalization and new media, and generally the performers’

greater degree of education and parallel knowledge of literary cultures and values. On the other hand, we know very little of internal evaluation and criteria assimilated and implemented, for example, by very competent performers in most past traditions and communities. However, the chief values of any contemporary culture of lyrical improvisation or composition-in-performance stem precisely from orality: the capacity to compose poetry with an oral method and to act in an emergent, evolving performance.

Pathways to Rhyme and Rhyming

The thirteen chapters of the book proceed in two thematic clusters: rhyme's language-related development and use in historical contexts is addressed first, and established forms of rhyme and rhyming in recent and contemporary cultures are studied in the second. The opening chapter on Arabic poetry (Reynolds) introduces both early history and recent usage. Chapter six on Estonian poetry addresses all periods of the young literary history in this language, and the Finnish history of rhyme is addressed in chapters four, five, eight, and twelve. Midway between the two clusters, Fabb's account of rhyme's psychological and aesthetic characteristics lays the ground for analysis in the rest of the chapters, and offers as clue as to why systematic alliteration in many of the languages discussed in the first part yielded to systematic rhyme.

RHYME IN ARABIC AND MEDIAEVAL LATIN

Chinese poetry is documented to have had systematic rhyme for more than three thousand years (Brogan & Cushman 2012: 1182; Rouzer 2012: 234–235), and in Europe, Irish poetics, perhaps continuing a tradition in an elder but now lost poetry, demonstrably deployed rhyme early, even if the direction of early influences between Irish poetry and Latin hymnology are not very clear (Brogan & Cushman 2012: 1184). The Arabic mono-endrhyme is the first systematic usage of rhyme among the Middle Eastern and South Asian ancient literary cultures, and one of great worldwide impact, also on the inception of rhymed stanzaic poetry in the Iberian Peninsula.

Dwight Reynolds' extensive account of rhyme in Arabic poetry begins by presenting the long-standing culture where rhyme is documented already by the fifth century and is conceptualized not only as a characteristic but also an obligatory part of poetry. Along with poetry and prose Arabic employs rhymed prose, which is characteristic of many literature genres as well as the Qur'an, and prosimetric forms typical of oral narratives with alternating passages in prose and poetry. The pervasiveness of the end rhyme is also visible in Arabic poetry anthologies and dictionaries, both of which were being produced from eighth century onward, with entries organized according to their final letter. The spread of Islam carried with it the Arabic poetic principle of end rhyme. Reynolds then focuses on the multicultural chains of poetic influence and practice in the Arabic speaking Muslim Spain, al-Andalus. The invention of the song-form called *muwashshah* or *zajal* broke the Arabic end-of-line mono-rhyme culture by introducing interplay with

passages that used different end rhymes, and later also internal rhymes. The establishment of the new poetic forms immediately preceded the emergence of systematic rhyme in European vernaculars, as in the Occitan that was the birth place of the troubadour culture which flourished in 1100–1300, further influencing several other parts of Europe already during the 12th century (Paden 2012: 966–969).

The enthusiasm with which the new rhymed strophe models were encountered by the multi-ethnic and multi-language al-Andalus communities, and the succeeding impact, resembles a phenomenon which we can see now: the spread and adaption of hiphop culture and rap as its lyrical and musical element all over the world by young people after the commodification of the originally orally performed new styles in early 1980s. Similarly as described by Reynolds for al-Andalus and poetry written in Arabic by non-native poets, in most non-anglophone communities abroad, rap lyrics were first produced in English, which was the language of the African and Latino American youth that created this new genre. In the succession, the stylistic conventions of the new genre were adapted to native idioms.¹ While this adaption was often smooth because it could build on the shared medieval cultural heritage of established end rhyme and stanza forms, the impulse given by the U. S. hiphop culture was so pervasive that also young people in cultures where rhyme was not a conventional device of poetry began to rhyme their songs (for Japan and Korea, see Kawahara 2007, Manabe 2006, and Park 2016), as discussed elsewhere in this introduction. We may also recognise how contemporary rap lyrics have often ‘turned into a veritable bacchanal of rhymes’, which is how Reynolds depicts the al-Andalus fervour (see also *Oddekalv* in this volume).

Reynolds extends his chapter to an analysis of how the Arabic mono-end-rhyme worked in a previously notable oral tradition of Arabic epic singing. Based on his own long-term fieldwork in the community of hereditary epic singers in 1960s and 70s, this part of the chapter sheds light on how this end rhyme form structures the process of oral composition and the resulting product. The Arabic epic composers’ practices of rhyming their sequences with a certain end rhyme letter (standing for sound) as an identifier of that particular sequence, and the ability to also switch into another letter instead, exhibits how trained cognitive skills work in oral composition, with such inverted methods typical of poetic idioms that use end rhyme (cf. *Sykäri* in this volume).

While the Arabic use of rhyme was systematic – and obligatory – from early medieval times, rhyme was employed in Latin only sporadically and in several forms until its formalization during the high Middle Ages (early 11th to late 12th centuries), as discussed in the next chapter by Seppo Heikkinen. In Latin we see a notably different rhyme structure and development where the grammatical structure, which produces similar forms due to inflectional endings, and the changes of the metrical system, eventually

1 For the early history of hiphop and rap, see e.g., Rose 1994; Chang 2005; Toop 2000. On development outside the U.S., see e.g., Mitchell 2001; Alim et al. 2009; Terkourafi 2010; Nitzsche & Grünzweig 2013; *Sykäri* et al. 2019.

ended up producing regular two-syllable rhymes. Heikkinen elaborates on different early sources and influences that have or may have contributed to the development of rhyme in Latin: oral-derived poetic devices and the grammatical structure, the common stylistic device of hyperbaton that creates line-internal rhymes, foreign Semitic and Celtic influences, and the sequence, a novel form of ecclesiastical music and poetry that first appeared as an appendage of the Alleluia.

Heikkinen emphasizes that the development of rhyme in Latin was very slow and based on parallel usages and impact from both the change of the metrical system and external influence. The change of the metrical, quantitative system to syllabic and stress-based metre thus was not the only reason. We may compare this with Greek, which underwent during the first millennium a similar metrical change, but the modernizing vernacular Greek language poetry did not assimilate rhyme until late 14th century first in Crete, becoming standardised by 1500 in the Dodecanese islands, the areas under the Venetian and French conquest (Beaton 1980: 148–150; Holton 1991). Even then, the central metre, the iambic fifteen-syllable line, remained unrhymed on the mainland, where rhyme was objected to as a foreign Western device (Beaton 1980: 148–149). Because the chief form of poetry, oral and written, in the islands ever since the advent of rhyme has been the rhyming couplet, either as a stand-alone unit or structural element of longer narrative compositions, many researchers consider that rhyme and the couplet form arrived and were adopted from Italian troubadour poetry as one parcel. (For an overview, see Sykäri 2011: 117–119.)

RHYME'S COEXISTENCE WITH ALLITERATION AND DEVELOPMENT IN FINNIC LANGUAGES

Rhyme became established in the poetry of the major European language groups, Romance and Germanic, between the 12th and 13th centuries (Gasparov 1996; Brogan & Cushman 2012). The earlier established poetic device in Old Germanic as well as Finno-Karelian languages was alliteration, and this gave way to rhyme, similarly as in Latin, only after long periods of coexistence. The next four chapters discuss various stages of development from rhyme's sporadic occurrences in alliterative poetry in Northern European languages to the impact of alliteration in rhymed poetry and the processes of rhyme's establishment in the Finnic languages. While systematic rhyme and systematic alliteration are fundamentally different as poetic devices (Fabb in this volume) and chiefly appear in different traditions and historical layers, alliteration sometimes prior to rhyme, this does not hinder their coincidental, complementary or purposeful coexistence in sound patterning. In written song lyrics this is today often taken advantage of (e.g., Alim 2006; Bradley 2009; Salley 2011).

In chapter three, Frog compares the appearance and role of rhyme in three languages which rely on alliteration as their primary and in some cases obligatory poetic device: Old English, Old Norse, and Finno-Karelian poetry. The Old English (and Old Saxon) poetry addressed by Frog was being written and copied from roughly the eighth through the twelfth century while the Old Norse poetry was mainly written down in the thirteenth and fourteenth

century. As an inheritance from Old Germanic, these languages used alliterative meters until rhyme became prevalent in poetry of the subsequent vernaculars. Finno-Karelian languages were employed for writing only by the 16th century and chiefly for religious texts until the 19th century. Oral poetry held to its alliterative runosong tradition in eastern areas until the 20th century, and the material written down chiefly dates from the 19th century.

As noted by Frog, the processes of documenting Old Germanic oral poetry are not known and they may have varied between texts. As rhyme was not the expected device, texts may have been produced in a manner sustaining the uniformity of the metricalized device of alliteration. Moreover, while rhymes have been recognized in Old English, their occurrences have been viewed as lacking intentionality, and researchers have often only looked at end rhymes including the stressed syllable similar to later poetry. However, in a few yet clear cases rhyme co-occurs with the lack of metrically conventional or additional alliteration thus indicating that it was deliberately used as a metrical compensation. Old Norse Eddic and Skaldic poetries also show that rhyme was a recognized device that appeared in multiple forms, even if on stressed syllables extremely rarely.

In Heikkinen's chapter we saw that in Latin, rhymes appear due to the inflectional forms characteristic of the language's grammatical structure. Finnish and Karelian are heavily inflected languages with long words, and phonic parallelism similarly produces morphological rhymes, whether this is intentional or not (see also Reichl 2020 on Kirghiz epics). It may be for this reason that rhymes in Finnish and Karelian alliterative poetry have not drawn much attention. Alliteration in Finnic oral poetry is not metricalized, and just as its density varies between regions, traditions, and users, rhymes are more frequent in certain song dialects and certain singers. Frog points out that formulaic constructions lacking alliteration are more stable when this syntactic construction entails grammatical rhyme. In general, rhyme appears as a significant form of sound parallelism yet not a deliberate device for production of lines. Frog concludes that in all these languages rhyme appears beyond its incidental or ornamental occurrences in varying forms and degrees in relation to alliteration. Differences between the Germanic Old English and Old Norse are due to changes in the poetic ecologies, and between the Germanic and Finnic due to different linguistic structures and that alliteration is not metricalized in the latter, allowing larger variation in the creation of phonic parallelism.

In Scandinavia and its developing vernaculars deriving from Old Norse, the Norwegian four-line couplet *gamalstev* (old stave) rhyming abab or abcb is estimated to date from the 12th century and thus to be the oldest form of rhymed oral poetry in the area (Åkesson 2003; Ekgren & Ekgren 2021). Bengt R. Jonsson (1991) also identifies the development of the Northern ballad in Norway, which became established there first as written poetry during the last decades of the 13th century, but soon spread in oral tradition all over Scandinavia. Unlike in these close-by Scandinavian languages, however, the development of rhymed poetry was much further delayed in the non-Indo-European languages of the North-Eastern margins of Europe:

Finnish, Karelian and Estonian. It is clear that along with the Scandinavian influences, rhyme reached at least the coastal areas of Finland and Estonia, but for example ballad themes coming from west, south, and east were first integrated into the unrhymed runosong tradition (Asplund 1994: 33–34, 801–802). In addition to that the Finnic languages did not yet have established literary forms, their established oral poetic system, the trochaic, iterative, alliterative eight-syllable line meter, was very strong. It held its vitality as an oral culture in Eastern parts of Finland, Karelia, Ingria and Estonia until the beginning of the 20th century. Today, this shared tradition is often referred to as the runosong poetry (*runolaulu* in Finnish, *regilaul* in Estonian), and the meter the Finnic tetrameter; the conventionalized terms Kalevala-meter or kalevalaic poetry are also current in philological and folkloristic research (chapters by Frog, Kallio, and Bastman; for the terms, see Kallio et al. 2017).

As examined by Kati Kallio in the fourth chapter, systematic rhyme is documented in Finnish poetry only after the Reformation and the impact of Evangelist Lutheran hymn singing and other rhymed texts written by clergymen with the new models deriving from Sweden and Germany. Even in the west coast, where Swedish was (and is) widely spoken and the runosong tradition had quite totally yielded to rhymed and stanzaic forms by the 18th century, rhymed forms seem to have become established only during the 16th and 17th centuries in connection to Lutheran hymn singing. These early rhymed texts featured unstable and mixed uses of alliteration and rhyme, the first associated with the runosong and presumably non-intentional, the latter with the new Lutheran practices and intentional. Kallio shows how the rhymed texts have been evaluated sometimes as purposeful trials to quit the old, ‘pagan’ runosong tradition, sometimes as attempts to avoid its integrated Catholic references to saints, and in some cases the rhymed texts are attributed to a lack of compositional skill. When the analysis, however, takes into account a more varied set of impacts and interpretations, for example the impact of the runosong culture and the priests’ continuing use of Latin, it is possible to see these common practices as being aesthetically accepted and up-to-date, as discussed by Kallio.

In chapter five, Eeva-Liisa Bastman’s analysis also connects with the question of influence between alliteration and rhyme, and their parallel use, but by this end of the 18th century case of devotional text of the Pietist movement, rhyme is the expected genre convention. Bastman shows how the aesthetics of rhyme may, among other things, be influenced by the existence of a characteristically yet not normatively alliterative tradition.

Between oral poetry (orally composed, or memorized and orally performed poetry) and written ‘high’ literature, a lot of material was produced by non-elite authors during the long 19th century, a period of time counted from late 18th until early 20th century, and one of major social changes. In his division between oral, oral-derived and written-to-be-performed-orally poetic ‘texts’, as a result of intersections between methods of production, ways of performance, and layers of textualisation, John Miles Foley (2002) coined the term ‘written oral poetry’, by which he meant poetry written but deploying an oral register, or stylistic conventions of one. With the spread of literacy, also writing was increasingly taken up by self-taught authors in

the 18th and 19th century, with contributions directed especially at public education, historical accounts, and texts for spiritual uses. These texts often deployed commonly known oral registers as their basis, nevertheless regularizing stylistic components that were sparingly employed in oral usage and introducing linguistic structures from literary texts' conventions (Leino 1975). In relation to rhyme, this could sometimes mean parallel use of identical and nonidentical rhymes, or hypercorrect use of identical rhymes regardless of them being forced to fulfil only this aspect. In Finland, as well as elsewhere, the elite neither valued the emergent aspirations of the written oral poetry producers nor the more literature-oriented non-elite authors, both of whom begun to gain readership in the 18th century, followed by the opening of printing facilities to larger spheres and secular purposes in the form of broadsides and similar cheap publications (e.g., Laitinen & Mikkola 2013; Kuismin & Driscoll 2013).

Bastman analyses in depth the poetics of one late 18th century devotional text produced by a lay author among the Pietist movement. By the time of its writing, in the 1780s, the ongoing regularization of the Finnish written versification had come to the point where the hymn poetry metre was very regular, but the rhymes still were not. To make sense of how rhyme was possibly understood in this historical and spiritually purpose-oriented context, Bastman turns to examine the rhyming usage together with other forms of sound patterning, alliteration and assonance. Assonance is understood here as unordered sound parallelism, either assonant (regarding vowels) or consonant (regarding consonants) within the words and lines. Her analysis comes to two conclusions. Her first conclusion is that the nonidentical rhymes featured in the text were products of the historical situation in which rhyme's formal prerequisites were not yet established, and all the other poetic devices were conventionally deployed intermittently rather than normatively, in both strong and weak forms – thus rhyme could be aesthetically understood as a similar intermittent device with strong and weak alternatives. Second, she points out that all forms of sound patterning collaborated in the text in the creation of a multilayered emotional soundscape whose chief goal was performative: to allow the singers to put their soul into the joint spiritual act of singing, which was in this as in so many other spiritual movements understood as a major form of praising and communicating with the supreme being (cf. e.g., Kapchan 2009 for Sufism in France).

In addition to the above-mentioned reasons for rhyme being assimilated late in the Finnic languages, the Estonian language presents problems in terms of possibilities for identical sound patterning by its very structure. In chapter six, Maria-Kristina Lotman and Rebekka Lotman analyse how identical and different types of nonidentical rhymes have been employed and advocated in the history of Estonian literary poetry. Ever since the 17th century, when the first Lutheran hymns were translated and first secular poems composed in Estonian, the new literary device of rhyme collided with the Estonian vowel system, where vowel sounds are of unusually high number and have three durations. The short literary history has involved on the one hand efforts to conform to the strict rules advocated by the primary

literary model, German poetry, and on the other hand finding alternative models through experimenting with language. Rhyme has also been advised to be discarded altogether in favour of alliteration, which is the poetic device integrated in the oral runosong poetry. As shown with detailed case studies by the Lotmans, especially rhyme-partners with vowels of different durations and paired with umlauts continue to exist through the history, although this has varied greatly between authors.

Rap has become a significant popular genre also in Estonia, and there are now few obstacles in fitting the language with the several nonidentical rhyme forms brought about by rap rhyme models. The tables presented by the Lotmans point out the significance of the replication of the vowel sounds and less consideration for the consonants, which is one of the typical features of the U.S. rap (Alim 2006; Bradley 2009). As the replication of a series of vowels in the relatively long rhyme sections has established as the chief type of rap rhyme in Finnish, where words are long and compounds equally common, several Finnish studies on popular songs and rap have referred to this type of rhyme as a ‘vowel rhyme’ (see Sykäri 2014; 2017; also Sykäri in this volume).

RHYME’S PSYCHOLOGICAL AND AESTHETIC QUALITIES WITH REGARD TO ALLITERATION

Alliteration is sometimes thought of as a form of rhyme. Nigel Fabb’s analysis of both devices’ characteristics however argues that they are very different in how they work psycholinguistically and aesthetically in poetry. Based on a large variety of poetic traditions and drawing on multi-disciplinary research, Fabb illustrates their differences in terms of role, placement, and relation to nonidentity of the sound section. Both devices appear in relation to syllable and word, as well as a relatively short poetic unit, typically a line, half-line or a couplet, as their domain, and both can appear in a position that is fixed, free, or a mixture. However, rhyme more often tends to be in a fixed position, simultaneously marking the end of the line, whereas alliteration is almost always free. As analysed by Fabb, this difference in the position has further consequences for their relation to sound identity and possibilities to appear in intersecting patterns.

The result that the regularity of the placement of end rhyme and thus it being easily attended to provides a significant explanation to why end rhyme is so popular in song lyrics and oral poetry – beyond the apparent benefits to structure, rhythm and phonic pleasures of sound parallelism. What is attended to in poetry provides support for memorization but also makes, as a result of long-term rehearsal, the cognitively demanding method of anticipation in oral composition possible (cf. Reynolds, Rosenberg, and Sykäri in this volume).

RHYME AS A COMPOSITIONAL AND STRUCTURAL DEVICE IN ORAL POETRY

In chapter eight Venla Sykäri examines the micro-cosmos of oral composition in the genre of rhyming couplets with reference to Finnish material noted down during the latter half of the 19th century and beginning of 20th

century. Couplets as short standalone units that can either be memorized or composed orally, prefabricated to be performed later or extemporized on the spot, were popular in many European rural areas by that time, and in the Finnish-speaking area the genre was very vital. In this genre, more than a memory device, end rhyme is a genre identifier which differentiates the short utterance from normal language use, and for the oral composer, it is an obligatory reference point, which determines how s/he can say what s/he wants to say. It is also a benchmark of skill and experience, since it is the automation of the ‘end rhyme-first’ principle, reached after years of dedicated practice, which sets the composer free to think of contents and the quality of rhymes. In this chapter, Sykäri discusses how even well-worn end rhymes participate in the creation of a textual network where novelty is appreciated but continuation lays the background against which these novelties as well as even minor textual changes appear as creative in the speech community.

In chapter nine Susanne Rosenberg analyses the results of a contemporary experiment in which experienced singers try their hands on collectively improvising couplets with the aim of forming a ballad-style narrative. Rosenberg presents with examples three methods she has used in these experiments, and analyses their results and the singers’ reflections on their task. Both show that extemporized rhyming with end rhyme is hard. On the other hand, the experiments make explicit what people who have learned to improvise always tell in interviews of the central meaning of engaged, long-term practice: ‘no one is born as an improviser; an improviser is “born” through practice.’² In this practice, the attendance to end rhyme is one of the three central tenets. These are: 1) learning to anticipate end rhymes, and in the course of time also to anticipate the final line before even beginning the preceding line, 2) learning the performance conventions, and 3) learning to have ideas and to express them in the genre-dependent format (Sykäri 2017). In these experiments analysed by Rosenberg, the participants are experienced singers and familiar with improvising the melody but have only begun to practice to improvise new ballad couplets with end rhymes. Rosenberg concludes that the more familiar they are with performing in the target genre of ballads, the easier it is for them to practice the oral composition. This is logical since in addition to the practical help provided by genre conventions, melody and refrain, they can more readily move towards simultaneous processing of words and phonic similarity as discussed above.

Singing is the vehicle for the utterances created and performed in the rhyming couplet genre, as well as for the narrative ballad performance that can either be solo singing or alternation between the leading singer and a choir. In the Central Australian aboriginal traditions (Kaytetye, Alyawarr, and Warlpiri) presented by Myfany Turpin in chapter ten, the act of collective

2 Just as the lengthy assimilation and learning period is described for traditional singers (e.g., Lord 2000 [1960]), this attitude is presented by contemporary improvisers without exception. Recently, it was expressed with approximately this phrase by local improviser, *glosador*, Mateu Xurí, during a lecture provided to the students of the Catalan ethnopoetics course at the University of Balearic Islands in Palma de Mallorca (fieldwork data, 5.5.2022, Venla Sykäri).

singing is much more emphatically at the center of the practice than the text, and thereby also the role of end rhyme is chiefly performative, euphonious as well as structural. The performative role of rhyme in a devotional yet very different cultural and historical setting was analyzed in chapter five by Bastman as a call to the singers to partake emotionally. In the Aboriginal women's ceremonial genre whose Kaytetye name is *awelye* analyzed by Turpin, such a performative role is enhanced as the end-rhyme-like sound similarities are in fact not parts of words selected to fit in the sound pattern but syllables imposed on the words. Syllables which do not have independent semantic meaning but are added for euphony also appear on the other side of the world in Nenets songs that never rhyme in the conventional sense nor have stanza structures (Niemi 1998; Niemi & Lapsui 2004). In the Nenets songs these syllables are additional and formally work more like mono-endrhyme: the same syllable is used throughout the song. In contrast, the *awelye* songs' rhyming words change their last (always unstressed but in performance prolonged) syllable to that imposed by the rhyme pattern. The pattern also crosses the line repetition patterns. In this case, rhyme's role is at the same time that of creating an additional layer of sound patterning but also divergence in a poetics where otherwise repetition rules. This, again, highlights rhyme's multifaceted functionality.

PATTERNS AND PLACEMENT: HOW ESTABLISHED REGULARITY ALLOWS IRREGULARITY

All previous chapters make clear how important it is that rhyme is often placed at the ends of poetic lines, which can be interpreted as a device that crystallizes lineation. These chapters also show how rhyme ties lines with end rhyme to a regular pattern: mono-endrhyme, couplets, triplets, quatrains or larger units. In a vast majority of the world's rhymed traditions rhyme patterns are established, and a number of common patterns are employed, such as couplets or quatrains for ballads, reflecting the melody structures. Against this background of end rhyme and recurrent patterns being perceptually so self-evident, poets and song-makers can effectively dramatize patterns where irregularity or deviation is utilized for artistic effect. The next two chapters present examples of purposeful irregular rhyme patterning in contemporary rap lyrics and mid-20th century Finnish literature.

Early rap lyrics in the 1970s and early 1980s were cast in the common English 4+3, 4+3 stress meter used in ballads and children's songs, while later another familiar meter of English language poetry, the four-stress couplet meter, became established (Bradley 2009: 18–26). End rhyme is already the trademark of African-American-English as well as Latin American oral genres and lyrics in related musical genres. After its commodification in 1979, and with the rocketing growth in popularity ever since, as written songs, regular end rhymes also became emblematic of rap's expression. In the recitative speech-song style of delivery of rap, the correspondence of the text line's end rhyme with the end of the musical bar, colloquially expressed as 'going to the beat', has been a matter of principle. This is still common, just as it is typically one of the cornerstones in the exhibition of skill in improvised freestyle rap performances. However, after some decades of continuously

augmenting the length of rhyme sections and number of internal and chain rhymes, in addition to sourcing from other forms of sound patterning, modern rap consciously also plays with end rhyme position.

In chapter eleven, Kjell Andreas Oddekalv argues that in modern rap the line-final rhyme of the poetic line is not always placed to coincide with the end of the musical line (the bar), and to better grasp how this is central to rap's aesthetics, we need to rethink how to define the line-bar relationship relative to those structurally fundamental and other rhymes. Oddekalv begins his discussion by analysing how poetic metre and musical metre and their relation have been defined in research. To describe the realizations of line-bar relation, he proposes the terms convergent and divergent metrical structure, and the use of the term 'primary rhyme' instead of 'end rhyme'. That the play with divergence is indeed based on settled convergence is evident in that often this means using divergent passages within strophes that are otherwise convergent. However, the various forms and degrees of divergence appear in the analysis as central to personal styles in modern rap.

In chapter twelve Sakari Katajamäki takes up the theme of irregularity in terms of a rhyme pattern. Beginning with the medieval al-Andalus 'poetry lab' described by Reynolds in chapter one, end rhyme patterns associated with stanza structures have been central to definitions of poetic models developed and used by literary authors. Only seldom is the pattern of a longer work – which is still clearly felt as rhyming – irregular. Katajamäki presents one such case, the 123-page playful narrative poem *Kukunor* written by Finnish poet Lauri Viita in 1949. In Finland, Viita's work bordered between traditional literary verse with metre and rhyme and post-war modernism. Katajamäki carries out his experimental study by deploying several quantitative analysing techniques on two samples of the text. The analyses reveal how the author balances between avoiding recognizable regular schemes and creating phonetic parallelism in a way that the reader has a clear sense of rhyming yet cannot expect any specific occurrences of rhyme. The results also correlate with semantic features, proving that the statistical methods employed can together significantly help an analyser of similar works.

Already by the modernist times of Viita, rhyme and metre had lost their place in mainstream literary poetry to free verse, and readers of contemporary literary poetry may find these poetic devices remote. Yet rhymed verse holds a stable place in literary history and thus becomes familiar to ever new student generations in addition to being prominent in popular song and performance cultures. In the last chapter, Stefan Blohm and Christine Knoop present their experimental analysis of German students' genre expectations of literary poetry. It turns out that rhyme outweighs all other notions, both structural and those of content. The authors analyse this and other results by reflecting earlier empirical evidence on similar respondents and possible practical as well as cognitive integers, providing a short tour through current and recent research on cognitive processing and aesthetic evaluation of poetry. They find the shared readings during this generation's secondary schooling important but even more than this, rhyme's cognitive salience yields it more prominence with this group of young people than might be expected given the poetry to which they have been exposed. This

final chapter thereby reminds us of the salient mental connection between rhyme and poetry, despite the current dominance of free verse.

Current university age young people also have a salient experience of rhyme based on contemporary popular music and performance poetry genres. While literary poetry chiefly abandoned rhyme at the latest by the 1950s, this never happened in oral and popular song genres. The former had of course given way to the latter already during the inter-war period in most modernizing countries. In Europe, oral poetry continued to flourish in communicative genres until the 1970s at the margins: e.g., the Balkans, Mediterranean islands, Basque Country, Galicia, and Portugal, and was revived in many of these areas in the form of lyrical improvisation in the 1990s. Ballad singing never stopped in several areas of Europe and the U.S., but local ballad genres were in the 1990s also revived to accompany local dances in Brittany (see Constantine & Guillorel 2017). All these oral song and improvisation traditions lean on end rhyme. Popular song that took over the place of oral traditions never looked down on rhymes and the recent world-wide enthusiasm for performance poetics, improvised freestyle rap as well as spoken word, has made explicit that rhyme's euphonic potentiality is by no way exhausted, even if the regular and repetitive rhyme patterns – those that were the flowers of the literary poetry still a hundred years ago – may never return in serious poetry. Irregularity and especially those nonidentical forms which we saw cause so much tension during earlier centuries now create with full license pleasant soundscapes in a poetry that unites the word with the voice. A good example of this is the poem 'The Hill We Climb' composed by the young African-American poet Amanda Gorman and recited by her at the inaugural ceremony of the newly elected president of United States, Joe Biden, in January 20th 2021. This poem with its complex rhymes stylistically adheres to a long African-American lyrical and performance tradition. Spoken word has already permeated especially young adults' verbal art cultures worldwide. This specific public instance however made the genre and its aesthetics widely visible to the public at large. Rhyme, ever flexible in its applications, survives.

Appendix

A Partial List of Rhyming Traditions

This is a partial list of languages whose verbal arts have rhyme, based on what the editors of this volume have been able to find. The incompleteness of this list can be illustrated by the fact that even at proofs stage we discovered some new cases. Note that some sources are very cursory, and sometimes without examples. In some cases, it may be that a single individual is known to use rhyme in composing texts in the language; nevertheless we still treat this as a language whose verbal art has rhyme. Languages listed only here have not been listed in the index to this book.

In parentheses we indicate sources, using the following abbreviations in some cases:

- P = our source is a language entry in *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics* (Green 2012), whose entries each have their own extensive bibliographies.
G = Gasparov (1996)
F = Fabb (2015)
F2 = Fabb (1997)
FH = Fabb and Halle (2008)

Akan (rhyme in rap, Shipley 2009)
Albanian (Pipa 1975)
American Sign Language, ASL (visual rhymes: P, Klima and Bellugi 1976)
Amharic (Leslau 1990)
Apabhramsa (Arjunwadkar 1985)
Arabic (P, Reynolds this volume).
Arabic, Hassaniya (FH from Norris 1968)
Arabic, Moroccan (Elmedlaoui 2014)
Aranda ('lines terminating in identical syllables' Strehlow 1971)
Armenian (Navratil 2015)
Assamese (P)
Aymara (rhyme in rap, Swinehart 2019)
Bakhtiari (F from Lorimer 1954)
Balinese (Edmonson 1971)
Balti (Söhnen-Thieme 2007)
Bare'è (Grijns et al. 1989)
Basque (Barandiaran 2009)
Bengali (P)
Breton (P, F from Hemon 1962)
Bulgarian (G)
Burmese (Douglas 2010)
Cambodian (Ung 1972)
Catalan (P)
Chaha (Malone 1991)
Chinese (P, F from Cai 2008, FH from Yip 1984)
Cornish (P)
Croatian (P)
Czech (G, Worth 1977)
Danish (P)
Dutch (P, van der Schelde 2020 on rap)
English (P)
Estonian (Lotman and Lotman this volume)
Fijian (Quain 1942)
Finnish (Bastman; Kallio; Katajamäki; Sykäri this volume)
Flemish (P)
French (P, G)
Galla or Oromo (Chadwick and Chadwick 1940)
Ge'ez (Kiros 2004)
Georgian (P)
German (G)
Gothic (Worth 1977)
Greek (not Ancient or Classical, but in post-Byzantine Greek: P, see Modern Greek)
Guinea-Bissau Creole (rhyme in rap, Lupati 2016)
Gujarati (P)

Halang (F from Cooper 1973)
Hausa (P)
Hebrew (more systematically from the Byzantine period: P)
Hindi (P, F)
Hittite (occasional, P)
Hungarian (P, G)
Icelandic (P)
Ilocano (rhymed proverbs in some of the lowland Philippine languages: Jamias 1953)
Indonesian (P)
Irish and Scottish Gaelic (P, F from Knott 1994, F2 from Malone 1988a)
Italian (P, G)
Jarai (Jensen 2010)
Kabylie (Berber) (Bencheikh 2000)
Kakataibo (Prieto Mendoza in prep)
Kannada ('vakh' quatrains with occasional rhyme: P)
Karelian (Frog, this volume)
Kaytetye (Turpin, this volume)
Kazakh (P)
Khmer (P)
Kirghiz (Reichl 2020)
Kurdish (F from Shakely 1996)
Latin, post-Classical (G)
Mahar (Junghare 1983)
Malay (P, F from Braginsky 1991)
Malayalam (rhyme involving the second syllable in the line: Arjunwadkar 1985)
Maltese (Herndon and McLeod 1980)
Manx (Moore 1896)
Marathi (P, Arjunwadkar 1985)
Mayan, Tz'utujil (rhyme in rap, Bell 2017)
Mayan, Yucatec (rhyme in rap, Cru 2017)
Minangkabau (Tanner 1967)
Modern Greek (Beaton 1980)
Mongolian (F2 from Poppe 1958)
Nepali (Stirr 2015)
Norwegian (Worth 1977)
Ntumu ('The different parts [...] of the epic end with two rhyming lines': Alexandre 1974)
Occitan (P)
Old English (F from Mackie 1922, Frog this volume, and McKie 1997)
Old Norse (Frog this volume)
Oriya (P)
Orkhon Turkic poetry (P)
Oromo (Andrzejewski 1985)
Pali (Wright 2002)
Pamiri languages (*maddoh* genre in rhymed couplets: Levin 2007)
Pashto (Mackenzie 1958)
Persian (P)
Polish (P, G)
Portuguese (P)
Punjabi (P)
Qom (rhyme in rap, Beiras del Carril & Cúneo 2020)
Quechua (trap songs of Renata Flores, rap songs of Liberato Kani)
Rhonga (rhyme in rap, Rantala 2016)
Romanian (P, G, Steriade 2003)

Russian (P, G)
 Samoan ('identical vowel combinations – normally the final two – rather than vowel-consonant combinations', Moyle 1988)
 Sanskrit (but 'In the whole range of Sanskrit literature, we find use of rhyme only to prove the rule that Sanskrit poets do not employ [it]', with the exception of Jayadeva's *Gitagovinda*: Arjunwadkar 1985)
 Sardinian (Rosa 2003)
 Serbian (G, Worth 1977)
 Sinhala ('internal rhyming patterns': P)
 Spanish (P)
 Swahili (P, F from Abdulaziz 1979 and Harries 1956)
 Swedish (P, Rosenberg this volume)
 Tagalog (P)
 Tai (F from Chamberlain 1989)
 Tamil (*etukai* = rhyme on the second syllable, and *iyai pu* = end rhyme: Monius 2000, also Clare 2011, and P)
 Tatar, including Altai, Kazak, Turkoman (Chadwick and Chadwick 1940)
 Thai (P, F from Cooke 1980)
 Tongan ('assonant rhyme', Moyle 1987)
 Turkish (P, F2 from Malone 1982 and Malone 1988b)
 Ukrainian (G)
 Urdu (P)
 Vietnamese (P, F from Thông 1983, FH from Balaban 2003)
 Welsh (P, F from Williams 1953, F2 from Morris-Jones 1980)
 Yiddish (P)

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