Minding: feeling, form, and meaning in the creation of poetic iconicity

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The recognition that significant meaning cannot occur without form-in-feeling and feeling-in-form is what is lacking in the practice of most cognitive linguistics today (Sternberg 2003). Cognitive linguistics will never come of age until it can account for the human significance of the language utterance – and that can only occur when cognitive linguists discover the principles that enable feeling (sensation, emotion) to motivate expression. But to do this, they don't have to reinvent the wheel. A long tradition of aesthetics exists which, however flawed in its details, has been examining both form and feeling in works of art – music, dance, sculpture, architecture, art, literature, and so on. Susanne K. Langer (1967: xviii–ix) believed that the study of works of art as "images of the forms of feeling" would enable her to construct "a biological theory of feeling that should logically lead to an adequate concept of mind".

I suggest that literary study can help to develop a working model of what I call "minding" by establishing the role of the forms of feeling in language use. You might ask, why can't one create the model directly from the nonfictional language of everyday discourse? Why do we need to turn to non-discursive poetic language? Langer (1953: 40) points out that form is elusive in actual felt activity whereas "[a]rt is the creation of forms symbolic of human feeling". A symbol, she says (1967: 244), "always presents its import in simplified form, which is exactly what makes that import accessible for us. No matter how complex, profound and fecund a work of art – or even the whole realm of art – may be, it is incomparably simpler than life. So the theory of art is really a prolegomena to the much greater undertaking of constructing a concept of mind adequate to the living actuality". Langer (1953: 241) notes elsewhere that non-discursive form in art articulates "knowledge that cannot be rendered discursively because it concerns experiences that are not *formally* amenable to the discursive projection" – that is,

> the rhythms of life, organic, emotional and mental (the rhythm of attention is an interesting link among them all), which are not simply periodic, but endlessly complex, and sensitive to every sort of influence. All together, they compose the dynamic pattern of feeling. It is this pattern that only non-discursive symbolic forms can present, and that is the point and purpose of artistic construction.

For the cognitive linguist then, the study of literary texts can help illuminate the way in which human language is motivated by and expresses the forms of the mind feeling. The mechanism by which these forms of feeling are symbolized in language is iconicity. What has not yet been fully explored in iconicity studies of language and literature so far are two aspects of iconic representation: its phenomenological status and the role of feeling. In this paper, I suggest ways in which these iconic representations can be seen to be especially prominent in the literary arts and thus create what I call poetic iconicity. (Freeman 2007)

1. Theoretical framework

My exploration of "minding" in the ways feeling, form, and meaning interact in creating poetic iconicity is drawn from my understanding of three philosophical approaches: Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology, Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory of the sign, and Susanne K. Langer's theory of the mind feeling. In this section, therefore, I outline a brief sketch of some of the ways these approaches apply to my concept of poetic iconicity.

1.1. Iconicity

Art is the semblance of felt life (Langer 1953). Art's semblance is brought about through the mechanism of iconicity. The different varieties of artistic expression tend to focus on one of the five senses. That is, although the arts may involve several senses at once – like texture in the visible arts or sight in the musical – one of the senses dominates, as in sight for visual art or sound for music. This truism accords with Charles Sanders Peirce's (1955) theory of the sign. The *icon* is that which is closest to the concrete experiences of our senses, the *index* one step removed, and the *symbol* the most abstract. All three may occur in artistic expression (for example, in Renaissance art, the image of a human skull often appears in scenes of

arcadia. The skull iconically signifies the living person, it points to the fact of human mortality, and it symbolizes Death).[1] However, literature differs from the other arts because its means of expression is language, itself a symbolic form. Thus the semblance of felt life in literature, appearing through the medium of language, may incorporate any of the five senses, but less directly than those of its sister arts.

The idea that language is almost totally symbolic or arbitrary has been challenged in recent studies of iconicity (evidenced primarily in the work of the Iconicity Project (http://es-dev.uzh.ch/), with its fifth volume currently in press, special issues of the *Journal of Pragmatics* (1994, 22:1) on Metaphor and Iconicity in Language and the *European Journal of English Studies* (2001, 5:1) on Iconicity, and Masako Hiraga's (2005) volume on *Metaphor and Iconicity: A Cognitive Approach to Analysing Texts*). Such studies have found a much closer connection between form and meaning in conventional and poetic language use than had previously been assumed. As Nänny and Fischer (1999: xxii) have noted, iconicity can be imagic and diagrammatic, and diagrammatic iconicity can be structural and semantic (Fig. 1).

Terminology that links form to meaning (as in the title of the first volume in the Iconicity Project, *Form Miming Meaning*) introduces a misleading element into the cognitive processes at work. It implies that form is separable from content, that form can somehow be applied "after the fact" on a pre-existing content. In western literary tradition, this separation gave rise to the notion of "figures of speech," to the notion that literary texts, especially poetry, were differentiated from conventional language by the ornaments and embellishments of special forms. What is missing from this perspective is the realization that meaning arises from the form *of* content and the content *of* form. In other words, symbols are indivisible. As Langer (1953: 369) notes: "They only occur in a total form; as the convex and concave surfaces of a shell may be noted as characterizing its form, but a shell cannot be synthetically composed of 'the concave' and 'the convex'. There are no such factors before there is a shell".

1. Note that it is a skull and not some other skeletal part of the human body that is featured (like a leg or an arm). When Hamlet sees the skull the gravedigger has unearthed, he cries "Alas, poor Yorick!" thus identifying the object with the person. Whether or not we can actually identify the living person from the skeletal head, it seems a more likely association than identification by other body parts, since it is the seat of our cognition.

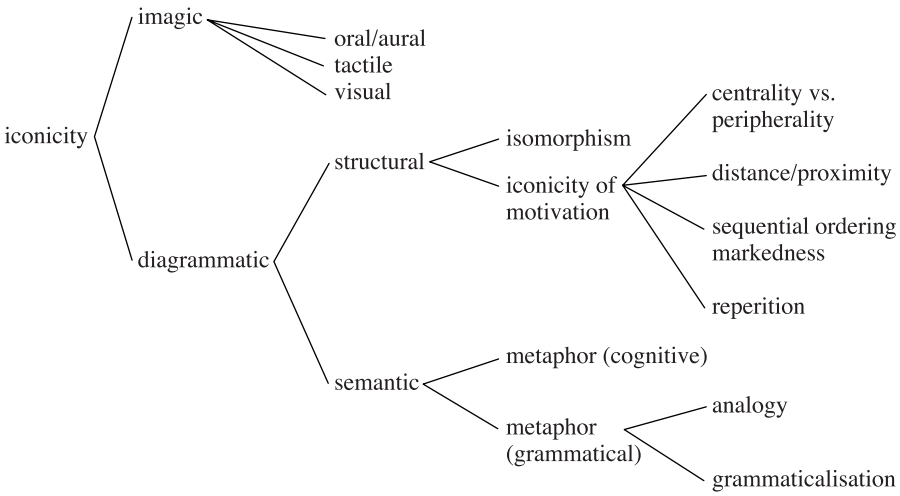

Figure 1. Types of Iconicity. (Based on Nänny and Fischer 1999: xxii.)

Peirce noted that the icon has a complex structure, composed of image, diagram, and metaphor. "Image" refers to the forming of a concept in the mind as in "imagination," and can thus denote mental concepts arising from external stimuli (through the senses) or internal stimuli (through the emotions and memory).[2] "Icon," in its rudimentary meaning, refers to the representation of an image. "Diagram" refers to the abstraction of the structure of the image, serving to symbolize the mental processes of creating concepts in the mind. This structure includes the morphological, phonological, and syntactical forms of language. At the level of discourse, structure also includes patterning of image, such as repetition, alliteration, rhyme, meter, and so on. The relation of image to diagram is one of

2. As Langer (1967: 59) notes: "An image does not exemplify the same principles of construction as the object it symbolizes but abstracts its phenomenal character, its immediate effect on our sensibility or the way it presents itself as something of importance, magnitude, strength or fragility, permanence or transience, etc. It organizes and enhances the impression directly received. And as most of our awareness of the world is a continual play of impressions, our primitive intellectual equipment is largely a fund of images, not necessarily visual, but often gestic, kinesthetic, verbal or what I can only call "sitational." […] [W]e apprehend everything which comes to us as impact from the world by imposing some image on it that stresses its salient features and shapes it for recognition and memory."

total integration. When diagram takes on the characteristics of image, then iconicity at the more abstract level occurs. Peirce apparently did not elaborate on the processes by which iconicity in this sense occurs, although his linking of metaphor with image and diagram as components of the icon is suggestive in this direction (Hiraga 2005).[3]

Halliday (1994: 143) identifies three kinds of iconic correlation between grammar and concept: linear order, nominalization, and the combination of the two. Hiraga (2005: 42–43) recognizes the metaphorical nature of Halliday's iconic representations. Syntax becomes metaphoric when it maps the movement of theme-background to rheme-foreground (these are Halliday's terms) onto the "periodic flow of information". Nominalizations are metaphoric when they reify, or make objective entities, out of processes or events. As Langer (1967: 20f.) notes:

> The fact that we call something by a name, such as "feeling," makes it seems like a kind of thing, an ingredient in nature or a product. But "feel" is a verb, and to say that what is felt is a "feeling" may be one of those deceptive common-sense suppositions inherent in the structure of language which semanticists are constantly bringing to our attention. "Feeling" is a verbal noun – a noun made out of a verb, that psychologically makes an entity out of a process.

"Mind", I suggest, may also be seen as a metaphoric reification of the process of minding.

1.2. Minding

For Langer (1953, 1967), the relation of form to feeling lies at the basis of all art. In her definition of the arts (and especially poetry) as the semblance of felt life, Langer points to iconicity as a structuring principle of art. Not "representation," note, or even "resemblance," but "semblance". As Langer (1953: 49) notes, semblance (or *Schein*) "liberates perception –

3. Hiraga follows traditional thinking about form and content by analyzing metaphor as linking form to meaning. However, her idea that metaphor is the icon's connecting bridge is worth exploring. If one substitutes "image" and "diagram" for "form" and meaning," Peirce's notion of the structure of the icon as being composed of image, diagram, and metaphor makes more sense. It is beyond the scope of this study to pursue the idea further, but it may provide philosophical justification for the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor (Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1998; Fauconnier and Turner 2002; Brandt and Brandt 2005).

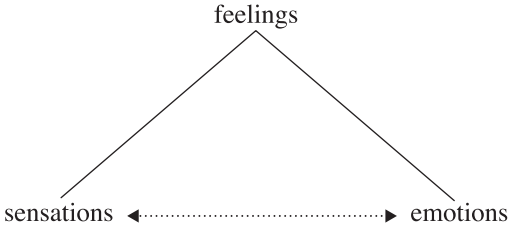

Figure 2.

and with it, the power of conception – from all practical purposes, and lets the mind dwell on the sheer appearance of things". Not likeness or similarity but the image of. And not simply the image of life, but the image of *felt* life.

Feelings arise from two sources: sensations, from interaction with the external world through the five senses, and emotions, which are internally generated. Sensations and emotions may themselves interact bidirectionally, with sensations triggering emotions and emotions coloring sensations (Fig. 2).

In this way, we both act upon and are acted upon by our environment as we develop mental concepts through interaction with the physical and intersubjective social world that makes up the phenomenological world of our experience. Feeling, form, and meaning are all intertwined components of the cognitive processes of the embodied human mind or "minding" in language and literature. "Minding" is the term I use for the cognitive processes of the embodied human mind that include not just conceptualizing, but form[ing] and feeling too.[4] Because "minding" is an activity, not an object, and because it primarily means "caring for or about," it is my attempt to capture Langer's idea of the mind forming, feeling, and meaning.[5]

4. Louise Sundararajan notes that in Chinese, the seat of emotion and reason is the same, with one word in Chinese to represent mind and heart (e-mail communication 1/31/06). Kang Yanbin (e-mail communication 1/27/06) informs me that there are two words for mind and feeling: "Mind refers to the intellect, *zhi*, while feeling refers to emotions, *qing*. But we do have a more encompassing word which might include the two levels of meaning. That is *xin* […] The word *xin* can be put together with *zhi* and *qing*, reinforcing the two ideas respectively".
5. Langer's philosophical project to equate mind and feeling, in spite of their separation in the English lexicon, can be seen in the title of her second volume: *Mind: An Essay on Human Feeling*.

Form and feeling have long been recognized as particular attributes of poetic expression. However, it would be misleading to think of them as separate attributes, just as it is misleading to think of form and meaning as separate entities. Form, feeling, and meaning (or, more specifically concept) are rather aspects of the phenomenon that creates "meaning" in the sense of significance or understanding.[6] These aspects are experienced differentially in the acts of composing and interpreting a literary text. That is, the writer conceives the feeling from which form-meaning emerges: feeling of sense-emotion creates form-meaning which is embodied or employed in the language of the text, in the representation of sound (and sight in the case of the written text). The reader experiences this form-meaning in the text from which the recognition of the writer's conceived feeling emerges: form-meaning in sound (and sight) embodies feeling of sense-emotion. The task of the literary scientist then becomes to model these relations as they are employed in the text itself. I think one of the most challenging tasks facing cognitive poetics in the foreseeable future is to find ways to articulate these connections.

1.3. Embodiment

Merleau-Ponty's (1962) work, in steering between the Scylla of rationalism and the Charybdis of empiricism, anticipated cognitive linguistics' notion of embodied realism (Freeman 2004). Although his untimely death in 1961 cut short the development of his ontology of the flesh (1968), enough remains to give a sense of where he was heading in his understanding of our phenomenological world. As I understand his thought, the world is real, not because it exists independently of the mind, but because our being is in the world and is part of the world. Our bodies are synthetic unities of sensations, thoughts, and emotions, so that they should be compared, Merleau-Ponty (1962: 150) claims, "not to a physi-

6. The ambiguity of the term "meaning" creates a confusion between the content of a linguistic expression and its sense or significance. Use of the term "sense" produces a different kind of confusion, between the sensations arising from the five senses and what is indicated by the phrase "making sense" of something. The challenge for scholars of cognitive poetics is how to use such natural language terminology to describe phenomena that go beyond it, a challenge that parallels the attempt of a poetic text to capture the nature or essence of the phenomenological experience in language that, because of its own nature, obscures or conceals it.

cal object, but rather to a work of art". A poem cannot exist apart from its existence on the page:

> Its meaning is not arbitrary and does not dwell in the firmament of ideas: it is locked in the words printed on some perishable page […] A novel, poem, picture or musical work are individuals, that is, beings in which the expression is indistinguishable from the thing expressed, their meanings accessible only through direct contact, being radiated with no change of their temporal and spatial situation (1962: 151).

The body thus exists in an organic relationship with the world. What is invisible to it does not *not* exist, but is rather "in-visible," lying latent, hidden, as another dimensionality. The negation of the visible is not Sartrean absence or abyss but, as Merleau-Ponty (1968: 257) says in his Working Notes: "what, relative to the visible, could nevertheless not be seen as a thing (the existentials of the visible, its dimensions, its nonfigurative inner framework)". What this mean is that "Nothingness is nothing more (nor less) than the invisible," that is, the existing flux before objectification into concepts (1968: 258). It is this sense of nothing that I think Wallace Stevens (1961: 10) captures in the closing lines of "The Snowman":

> For the listener, who listens in the snow,
> And, nothing himself, beholds
> Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

In these lines, Stevens breaks through the veil of our conceptualizing the world as a positive artifact that we can hear and see in order to articulate the dimensionality of the invisible. The invisible is the primordial precategorial, that which exists before our conceptualizing minds bring experience into consciousness: "what exists only as tactile or kinesthetically, etc.". (Merleau-Ponty 1968: 257).

These two ideas – of nothingness existing in an invisible dimension, and the primordial experience of the precategorial – are what poets attempt to encapsulate through the mechanism of iconicity.

1.4. Poetic iconicity

Although Reuven Tsur's (1992, 2003) work in cognitive poetics never explicitly refers to the notion of iconicity, his approach incorporates the relation of feeling and form that I consider a necessary element in poetic

iconicity. He argues that the effect of poetry is to slow down or disrupt the conceptual processes that lead to constancy and coherence (cognitive stability) and efficient coding of information (cognitive economy), those elements of the mind that enable us to function "normally" in the world. Under this view, what poetry is doing, like all the arts, is to bring us, for at least a little while, into a certain relation with the world. This relation is variously described in the arts, in different philosophies and religions, as expressing the inexpressible, stopping to smell the roses, becoming one with the universe, to capture, in Merleau-Ponty's terms, the primordial experience of the invisible.

Poetic iconicity creates in language sensations, emotions, and images that enable the mind to encounter them as phenomenally real. As Merleau-Ponty (1962: 404) notes, moments of great danger and great love can trigger this response. It is what it means to live wholly in the present moment, to grasp the phenomenally real. Anyone who has experienced this phenomenon will know what I mean. The Persian word for this experience is *ghayb*: the unseen world "from which the soul receives its most rarefied nourishment. Everything existing in the visible world is the imperfect mirror of this hidden reality" (Wheeler 2006: 23). Unlike the corresponding Platonic notion of Forms that exist in an idealized state, however, this "hidden reality" is the flip side of our everyday experience and may be accessed at any moment. John Burnside (2005: 60) describes it well as an excursion "into the quotidian," into Paul Eluard's

> "*autremonde* – that nonfactual truth of being: the missed world, and by extension, the *missed self* who sees and imagines and is fully alive outside the bounds of socially-engineered expectations – not by some rational process (or not as the term is usually understood) but by a kind of radical illumination, a re-attunement to the continuum of objects and weather and other lives that we inhabit".

Most important, here, is Langer's understanding of an art object. It is not the *resemblance* of life that is represented in an art work, but the *semblance*, the illusion of vital life in its rhythms, sensations, emotions: what Henry James called "felt life". That is, as Langer (1953: 245) puts it, "every successful work of literature" is not a representation, expression, or imitation of life, but "is wholly a creation… an *illusion of experience*": "What [the author] makes is a symbol – primarily a symbol to capture and hold his own imagination of organized feeling, the rhythms of life, the forms of emotion" (1953: 392).

I want to make it clear here what we are talking about. We need to distinguish the emotion arising from the semblance of felt life in a literary

work from both the personal feelings of the author or the personal feelings of the reader. It is not the author's feelings that are created in a literary work, but feelings that are *conceived* by the author in creating the semblance of felt life. With respect to reading, critics often speak of the emotion *evoked* by a literary text, the fact that a literary work can "move" us, what Meir Sternberg (2003: 355) calls "affect-bound reduction". That is not at all what I mean or what I think Langer is referring to. Readers of a literary text are not experiencing these conceived feelings directly. I am not angry or frustrated at Casaubon's treatment of Dorothea in George Eliot's novel, *Middlemarch*, though one of the characters, Will Ladislaw, is. Instead I recognize these feelings of anger and frustration in Will, and empathize with him. This is aesthetic attitude or what Edward Bullough termed "psychical Distance" (quoted in Langer 1953: 318f.). The actual feelings expressed in the text are rather a state of emotional knowledge, what Indian scholars call *rasa*, communicated through suggestiveness or *dhvani* (Hogan 2003: 156).[7] Aesthetic distance allows the experience of emotions emerging from the text, not from the author or the reader. And that is what enables us to recognize the role of the emotions in nondiscursive, literary language, and suggests a way in which we might also account for the role of emotion in discursive, actual language use.

In poetry, the relation between form and feeling is stylized into deliberate word choice and order. For example, consider the (nonpoetic) sentence "the flowers blossomed yesterday and withered today". The order of events is iconically chronological: yesterday comes before today, first the flowers blossom, then they wither. The verbal actions of blossoming and withering are presented in parallel, conjoined by the grammatical conceptual metaphor of equality, making the blossoming and withering on a par with each other. The sentence holds no surprises; it reflects something that is part of our everyday experience. If I adjust the sentence slightly, by changing the conjunctive metaphor of conceptual equality to subordinate one of the clauses in "the flowers that blossomed yesterday withered today," more emphasis is placed on the withering, since the opening clause, being subordinate, is incomplete and therefore demands what Tsur (1972, 1992) calls "requiredness". The feeling engendered by the idea of withering is heightened through the suspense created by the incomplete clause, bringing this sentence closer to poetic expression. Both sentences, though different in their import, are still in discursive mode,

7. See Patrick Colm Hogan (2003) for an extensive discussion of this question.

they tell us something about what the flowers do. However, by reversing the order of events, the Chinese poet Tong Cui Hui makes us see first the withered flowers and then makes us reflect on their earlier blossoming: "withered flowers today blossomed yesterday" (quoted in Du 1976: 491).[8] By deverbalizing the action of withering, the line emphasizes the underlying nature of the verbal actions as inchoative, which, as Donald C. Freeman (1978: 6) explains, "denote some state which is in the process of coming about."[9] By making "withered" an adjective, the line also has the effect of freezing the image of the flowers in their state of witheredness. Tong's line captures not just the event and the idea of decay but highlights the emotion aroused in the *contemplation* of decay. It adds value to the everyday meaning of the first sentence; it makes us feel the effects of decay at the same time that it makes us mourn the memory of past blossoming.[10] That is what poetic iconicity is. It makes language work to create the semblance of felt life. All successful art is iconic in this sense.

2. Two case studies

Poetic iconicity differs from discursive iconicity in at least two ways. It creates the feeling of form and it breaks through or transcends the abstracting tendency of conceptual language in order to create the immedi-

8. I am grateful to Louise Sundararajan for this reference.
9. Freeman was the first to call linguists' attention to what he called "syntactic mimesis" in poetry, what is now described as syntactic iconicity.
10. Two anonymous reviewers questioned my earlier discussion of Tong's line by pointing out that both the nonpoetic line and the poetic one conveyed iconicity. One reviewer asked if it weren't more a matter of foregrounding in the poetic text, and the other asked if it weren't rather iconic of the "capacity to emotionally remember" and therefore convey the mind's nostalgia. I think the difference between discursive iconicity and nondiscursive (or poetic) iconicity lies in the latter's creation of what Langer calls conceived feeling, feeling that is iconically embodied in the text. I don't think, upon reflection, that foregrounding is what makes the difference in Tong's line. Preposing "withered" to the beginning of the line makes it the topic focus of the sentence; in its position at the end of the sentence, "blossomed" is given stress emphasis, so that neither predominates over the other as figure against a ground. What is foregrounded in Tong's line is rather the emotion it embodies. For me, Tong's line evokes grief over the past blossoming rather than nostalgia (but see my discussion of the distinction between value and import in the next section). Neither of the discursive sentences embody such conceived feelings.

acy of the present moment in its primordial or "other-world" experience. I explore the first of these in a discussion of a poem by Thomas Hardy; the second discussion shows how Emily Dickinson makes her language phenomenally real.

2.1. Thomas Hardy

In speech situations, participants are attuned to the inflections and mannerisms accompanying the discourse, the tone of voice, the kinesics of gesture, the expressions of facial features, etc., that convey emotion. Certain devices and techniques in written language, such as punctuation, syntactical ordering, meter and rhythm, emphatics and hedges, exploiting the conceptual domains of word choices, symbolize these metalinguistic features. But they do not exhaust the possibilities of conveying the semblance of feeling in written form. Several additional strategies exist that enable us to identify the forms of feeling in a written text. They all serve to enable the feeling mind to select and shape the text's form.

First is the question of focus: grounding the text in a situation that leads to the adoption of perspective. Consider, for example, a poem by Thomas Hardy, "Transformations":[11]

Portions of this yew
Is a man my grandsire knew,
Bosomed here at its foot:
This branch may be his wife,
A ruddy human life
Now turned to a green shoot.

These grasses must be made
Of her who often prayed,

11. I am grateful to Donald Hall (personal correspondence) for pointing out a misprint in most editions of the poem, an error that was corrected in Samuel Hynes's (1984: 211) edition of Hardy's poems. As Hall notes: "The first time Hardy printed it, in the Mellstock Edition, he used the word 'vainly' [line 11]. The second time he published it, in Moments of Vision, the error crept in. It is a typical typesetting error (and a typical proofreading error) that a word is reprinted, mistakenly, when it is the same word that has been used in a previous line above it – and which makes sense. The typesetter put 'often' under 'often' – and if Hardy proofread it, he did not notice – again and again. Anyway, 'vainly' is the better word, in connection with a 'fair girl,' and I think it helps to bring out (at least slightly) the Biblical sense of 'know'."

Last century, for repose;
And the fair girl long ago
Whom I vainly tried to know
May be entering this rose.

So, they are not underground,
But as nerves and veins abound
In the growths of upper air,
And they feel the sun and rain,
And the energy again
That made them what they were!

On a communicative, discourse level, the poem may seem to be expressing the belief that people don't really die, but are transformed into another form of life. Beginning students of literature almost always read the poem this way. In fact, so do many experienced readers of literature. The idea is certainly there in the poem. But whose belief is it? Such a reading misses the poem's emotional import. In its reliance on the discursive content, a discursive reading misses the forms of feeling that make this poem a semblance of felt life.[12] As Sternberg (2003: 363) notes, "Not the driest world-making possibly remains value-free, no agent fails to act somehow on our human nature, no movement in time leaves us unmoved". Consider, for example, what we assume about the speaker of the poem. Given its provenance, a Hardy poem at the turn of the last century, the speaker is presumed to be male. Although he is not directly identified as such, the fact that he tells us he "often tried to know" a "fair girl" indicates his sex. He is old, since it was "long ago" that he courted the girl. Mention of a "yew" in the first line indicates that he is in a churchyard (yew trees are

12. I am endebted to Donald Hall (1992: 45–48), who first drew my attention to the poem's emotional tone. According to Langer (1953: 234) the poet is using the laws of discourse (by using linguistic forms) on a different semantic level: "this has led critics to treat poetry indiscriminately as both art and discourse. The fact that something seems to be asserted leads them astray into a curious study of 'what the poet says,' or, if only a fragment of assertion is used or the semblance of propositional thought is not even quite complete, into speculations on 'what the poet is trying to say'. The fact is […] that they do not recognize the real process of poetic creation because the laws of imagination, little known anyway, are obscured for them by the laws of discourse. Verbal statement is obvious, and hides the characteristic forms of verbal figment. So, while they speak of poetry as 'creation,' they treat it, by turns, as report, exclamation, and purely phonetic arabesque".

poisonous and in England are planted in churchyards to protect browsing animals from them).[13] So we have an old man, possibly close to the end of his life, contemplating the graves of people who have been dead a long time. What are his conjectures? His feelings? His thoughts lead him to the idea that the dead have been or are being transformed into the living plants around him. But what does he feel?

Sternberg (2003: 364) has alerted us to the fact that "affective and conceptual processing may join forces or join battle […]: now in harmony, now in disharmony…or now with this balance of power, now with that. The rhetoric of narrative thrives on such protean fact/feeling interdynamics". What readers of Hardy's poem who focus on the discursive meaning miss is that the affective forces are at war with the conceptual. That is, the old man *wants* to believe in what he is musing because he is *resisting*, not accepting, the fact that he too must die.

Another strategy that helps us identify the form of feeling in a text is grammatical selection. The grammatical form the poem takes shapes the old man's attitude. Note, for example, the use of the epistemic modals: "this branch *may* be his wife"; "These grasses *must* be made"; the fair girl "*May* be entering this rose". The poem takes the form of a syllogism: if this is true and this is true, then this is also true, as indicated by the "So" of the final stanza. But the logic is false: mays and musts do not lead to factual "are". The old man's feelings that he does not want to lose the experience of feeling the "sun and rain" and "the energy" that makes him what he is leads him to protest too much. The discursive, grammatically well-formed assertion that "they are not underground,/…/And they feel the sun and rain,/ And the energy again" is interrupted by the insertion of the "But as" clause in lines 14–15. The irony of the "But as" construction is that the old man is trying to make it mean "but since," with the idea that nerves and veins of the dead are transformed into the limbs of living plants. (Note that the argument here is not over whether dead bodies provide fertilizer for living plants, which of course they do, but that the elements of life itself, the nerves and veins, are what survive.) The old man's feelings betray him so

13. The nature writer Paul Evans (2006: 20) notes: "The greatest lure [for thrushes] is the yew berry. The scarlet, fleshy aril of the yew encloses a poisonous seed and tastes sweet and slimy. The cup-shaped aril is the only part of the yew that does not contain the highly poisonous pseudo-alkaloid taxine. In the old cultures of northern Europe, where the redwings and fieldfares come from, the yew is the 'death-tree'. But, although associated with death and the underworld, the yew also symbolizes resurrection and the persistence of life".

that we understand it rather as an analogy, that it is *his* "nerves and veins" that "abound / In the growths of upper air," not those of the dead. Lines 14–15 disrupt the grammar of the discursive assertion by changing the scope governing the following lines, with the result that there is again a grammatical discordancy, reflecting the tension between the old man's thoughts and desires. Reading "discursive" grammar without recognizing the minding that is being expressed through it misses the living scenario that the poem is creating: the impact of felt (as opposed to reasoned) life. The use of the past tense in the last line is the final betrayal of the old man's false logic: not "That make them what they are," which would support his faith in their still living continuance, but "That made them what they were". The exclamation point at the end adds the final emotional straw to the old man's feelings: to want to believe what he otherwise knows is false.

This discussion raises the inevitable protest that poems exist on several levels, can be protean in meaning. So why should the discursive reading be wrong? I discovered in reading Langer that she also shares my belief that though meanings may multiply on the conceptual level, the forms of feeling in language, whether discursive or nondiscursive, are unitary in nature. That is, unless one is actually struggling with a complex of emotions when uttering a thought, only one feeling predominates. In speaking of the symbolic power of art in creating a pattern of tensions and resolutions, Langer (1953: 373) says:

> If feeling and emotion are really complexes of tension, then every affective experience should be a uniquely determined process of this sort; then every work of art, being an image of such a complex, should express a particular feeling unambiguously […]. I suspect that this is the case, and that the different emotional values ascribed to a work of art lie on a more intellectual plane than its emotional import […].The same feeling may be an ingredient in sorrow and in the joys of love. A work of art expressing such an ambiguously associated affect will be called "cheerful" by one interpreter and "wistful" or even "sad" by another. But what it conveys is really just one nameless passage of "felt life," knowable through its incarnation in the art symbol even if the beholder has never felt it in his own flesh.

The emotional *value* placed on a work of art is not the same as its emotional *import*. "To use a simple example from actual experience: a person may cry, thus imposing emotional value on an event, but the crying has only the emotional import, wether of happiness or sadness". Reuven Tsur (1992, 2003) has shown us how the form of feeling may serve more than one emotional value (or valence) in his discussion of convergent and di-

vergent styles and split and integrated focus.[14] That is, it depends on what is being marked for attention that determines whether a convergent or divergent style or a split or integrated focus supports or destabilizes our cognitive processing. Tsur suggests that divergent style and integrated focus in particular lend themselves to producing an emotional quality. What results in the work of art is its emotional import, its significant form.

2.2. Emily Dickinson

A poem by the nineteenth century American poet Emily Dickinson creates an iconicity that makes its language phenomenally real for the reader (F1268*A*/J1261).[15] Its theme reflects the idea that written words that remain long after their writer has died may still exert power over their

14. Tsur (2003: 289) explains convergent and divergent style as follows:

> "Convergent" style is marked by clear-cut shapes, both in contents and structure; it is inclined toward definite directions, clear contrasts (prosodic or semantic) – toward an atmosphere of certainty, a quality of intellectual control. "Divergent" style is marked by blurred shapes, both in contents and structure; it exhibits general tendencies (rather than definite directions), blurred contrasts, an atmosphere of uncertainty, an emotional quality. Convergence appeals to the actively organizing mind, divergence to a more receptive attitude. The two are not solid categories, the differences are of degree, shadings are gradual, along a spectrum.
>
> Split and integrated focus refers to the ways in which elements are manipulated in a text. As Tsur (1992: 112) explains: "In non-literary language, the reader tends to 'attend away' from the phonological *signifiant* to the semantic *signifié*. The sound patterns of poetry (meter, alliteration, rhyme and the like) force him to attend back to the sound stratum. Up to a certain point, a mild increase of the cognitive load on the perceptual apparatus caused by the reader's additional attention to these sound patterns is perceived as a more or less vague musical effect, usually of an emotional quality. Beyond that point, however, the focus becomes split, and the perceived quality may be 'witty'".

15. Numbers refer to the Franklin (F) and Johnson (J) editions of the poems. The poem exists in two forms. One is a pencil draft and includes a revision and two variants, as indicated in the text quoted. It resides in the Amherst College Archives (A 121). The other form is a transcript of the first stanza made by Dickinson's Norcross cousins from a letter sent to them. It reads as follows:

> We must be careful what we say. No bird resumes it's [*sic*] egg.
> A word left careless on a page
> May consecrate an eye, When folded in perpetual seam
> The wrinkled author lie.

readers. Iconicity occurs across two dimensions in the poem: within the semiotic world of the poetic text, and within the phenomenal world of actual readers of the poem written by Dickinson. I will distinguish these two domains, the semblance of the poem-world and the semblance of the poet-world, by referring to the maker of the "Word" *in* the poem as "he / author" and the writer of the words *of* the poem as "she / poet":

A Word dropped
careless on a Page
May stimulate an
Eye
When folded in
perpetual seam
The Wrinkled Maker
lie

Infection in the sentence
breeds
~~And~~ we may inhale
Despair
At distances of
Centuries
From the Malaria -

Variants: line 3 stimulate] consecrate; line 7 Maker] Author
Revision: line 11 And] *cancelled*; "may" inserted after "we"

All literature may be said to exist on two planes of perception: the semiotic world of the text and the phenomenological worlds of the author and reader (Johansen 1996).[16] Coleridge's (1817) famous phrase, the "willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith," describes the process by which the imagined world temporarily replaces the phenomenal (that is, the world of lived experience). In Dickinson's poem, the two worlds are made to intersect through the iconic mapping of the "Word" within the semiotic world of the poem onto the actual word on the page that we as readers see. The moment of intersection occurs as the poem moves from the unspecified "eye" of the first stanza to the introduction of "we" in the second. Since both terms refer to the reader, the eye becomes ours, and the poem suddenly occupies two planes at once. The experience of reading the poem, of subconsciously absorbing

16. I thank one of the reviewers for this reference.

its iconic features of image, syntax, and metaphor, leads us to the momentary lifting of the veil between the primordial felt world and the categorial conceptualized one, so that the poem's world becomes phenomenally real to us as we read the poem.

In a letter to her Norcross cousins, Dickinson wrote (F278*A*.2/J1212):

> Thank you for the passage. How long to live the truth is!
> A Word is dead when it is said
> Some say -
> I say it just begins to live
> That day

How is it that a word may live? How is it possible that reading a word can elicit feelings in us that emanate from the formulation created by the person who wrote it? Dickinson's Malaria poem not only tells us that it is possible, but makes it happen in the process of the telling. The main argument of the poem is that careless use of language can be harmful. Put that way, the idea is a common enough, conventional one. But what the poem does is make us feel the force of that harm. It does so by iconic presentation, not just simply blending the ideas of writing and disease to create the metaphor of a word as infection, but by making this metaphor iconically represent ourselves as readers reading Dickinson's text and as a result inhaling the semblance of "Despair".

Each stanza is divided into two syntactic units which parallel their equivalents across the stanzas and bring them into metaphorical relation:

First stanza: the world of the text	*Second stanza: the metaphor of disease*
A Word dropped / careless on a	Infection in the sentence / breeds /
Page / May stimulate an / Eye	We may inhale / Despair
When folded in / perpetual seam /	At distances of / Centuries / From
The Wrinkled Maker / lie	the Malaria

Using Brandt and Brandt's (2005) model, the semiotic domains of writing and disease structure the Reference (target) and Presentation (source) spaces of the poem's metaphor (Fig. 3).[17]

17. In Brandt and Brandt's (2005) semiotic model of blending, the labels *Reference* and *Presentation* refer to the two input spaces in Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) blending model, and, for metaphorical blends, the target and source spaces, respectively. In this paper, I adopt the Brandts' model because

In the Reference space, we have a writer, words and sentences in a book created by the writer, and readers. In the Presentation space, we have a disease (malaria), infection arising from that disease, and victims. Identity mappings across the two spaces link writer to disease, words to infection, and readers to victims. The virtual space of the blend is structured by means of a time-frame projection from the Presentation space. That is, the fact that malaria, one of the oldest diseases known to man, can cause reoccurrence of its symptoms years after it is first contracted, is mapped onto the image of reading a text, so that the words can still affect the reader centuries after the author is dead.[18]

Structural mappings across the two input spaces link words into pairs to forge the metaphorical blend of writing and disease. There are, for example, six verbs in the poem whose forms match up with each other: two transitive (*stimulate* / *inhale*), two intransitive (*lie* / *breeds*), and two passive past participles (*dropped* / *folded*). The transitive and intransitive pairs reflect the two "sides" of the metaphor. Although the passive past participles appear to refer only to writing (the word dropped, the maker

it provides more detail with respect to the semiosis of the text and the dynamic schemas that motivate the various mappings that occur. Dynamic schemas are understood in Johnson's (1987: 19–23) and Talmy's (2000, 1: 40–42) sense, not of scripts and frames but as nonpropositional structures that organize our experience, and are equivalent to Fauconnier and Turner's (2000: 93–102) concept of vital relations. Figure 3 is adapted from Per Aage Brandt's (2004) work, but reflects Line Brandt's (2000) initial formulation. In an email (6-11-07), Line Brandt discusses my adoption of their model as follows: "Situational, argumentational and illocutional relevances are represented separately in the model (as opposed to as components in one mental space), and only argumentational relevance is represented as a „dynamic schema." In some cases, this schema is represented in a mental space, but not necessarily (only when conscious awareness of the schema is required to run the blend). In the example analyzed in 'Making Sense....,' the schema making the presentation relevant to the Reference is one of ethical/unethical acts. In other cases, the relevant schemas may be different ones (that is, the relevant schema is not the same in all cases)."

18. The *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (2005) notes that "Malaria is one of the most ancient infections known. It was noted in some of the West's earliest medical records in the 5th century BC, when Hippocrates differentiated malarial fevers into three types according to their time cycles". That Dickinson envisages malaria as an inhaled disease reflects the nineteenth century belief that the disease was communicated via the miasma of swampy and marshland areas, before scientists established that the infection was caused by the anopheline mosquito.

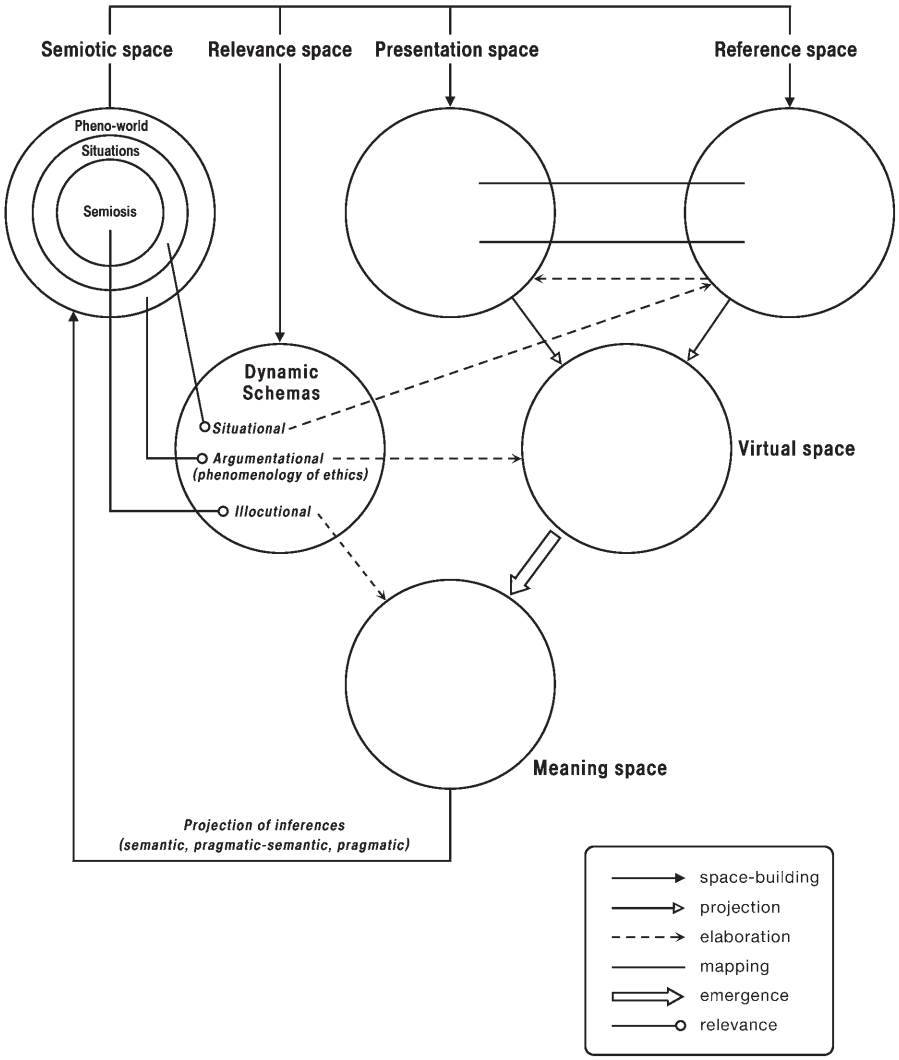

Figure 3. Brandt's (2004) modification of the blending model.

folded), the second is in fact a blend of the Maker as Malaria. The repetition of "may" (lines 3 and 11) before the two transitive verbs reinforces their pairing, and its sound echoes in the words "Maker" and "Malaria". The parallel placement of these two words, the first at the end of the first stanza and the second at the end of the last, bring both author and disease into a relation of causal enablement (that they "may" make something happen). The fact that the words alliterate and are both capitalized also brings them into relation. There are six determiners, three indefinite and three definite (*a Word* / *a Page* / *an Eye*; *the Maker* / *the sentence* / *the Malaria*). The order of their pairing (indefinite to definite) moves from establishment by definition to the establishment of identity.[19] Occurring at the end of the first stanza, the Maker is associated with the author of the words, but he is also associated with both the "sentence" of the second stanza and the Malaria that ends the poem. Thus the word defined becomes the disease identified.

The structure of the poem establishes the form of feeling that causes us as readers to move from the semiotic poem-world to the phenomenological poet-world. The semiotic world set up for the Reference space is that of writers, texts, and readers. Its situation is the event of an eye (metonymically introducing the reader) being stimulated by a word that has been dropped carelessly on a page. The word *stimulate* is well chosen: it means both to animate (to bring to life) and to goad into activity. And this is what the form of the poem – its lack of punctuation, its stanzaic units, and its line breaks – makes us as readers do. The lack of punctuation destabilizes the syntax, creating the phenomenon known in composition circles as garden path reading. Having read the words "dropped /…on a page" in lines 1–2, we may be led by identity of form in the past participles, *dropped* and *folded*, to read lines 5–6 as referring to the word, that is, the event described occurs when the word is "folded in" the "perpetual seam" of a book. However, the following lines stimulate us to rearrange the syntax, so that now the image presented is of an author "folded" in death. What results from this garden path activity is that we are primed to read the image of "The Wrinkled Maker" "folded in perpetual seam" not as one of a corpse wrapped in a burial shroud or lying in a seam of earth, but as a metaphor for the author being folded within the seams of a book. This then creates an affordance whereby the Maker that creates the word is iconically presented as the Malaria that causes the infection.

19. See Elżbieta Tabakowska's (1999: 416) discussion of definite and indefinite determiners as establishing identity and definition, respectively.

Dickinson's stanzaic units and line breaks stimulate us into further activity. The poem's two stanzas fall into two parallel units each, separated by *when* in the first stanza and *at* in the second. Each unit has two lines, except for the last unit in the first stanza that has three. What this means is that the odd line occurs right at the center of the poem, with seven lines before it and seven after. This line contains only one word, "lie," appearing as though it had been dropped in as an afterthought, an extra. Its isolated position in the exact center of the poem draws our attention to it and its inherent ambiguity. It can mean "to lie down, be prostrate" describing the way "The Wrinkled Maker" lies prone in death but also metaphorically folded within the pages of his book. It can also mean "to deceive, to misrepresent". In this reading, the operative word is "When" in line 5. That is, the word "when" is ambiguous. It can refer simply to time: words may stimulate eyes after their author has died. However, it also can carry the force dynamic schema of cause, as in the sentence, "When air is removed, people die". Now, it is not so much a question of time as it is of causation. That is, if the author lies, misrepresents, in the word he drops carelessly on the page, then the reader may be affected accordingly.

This reading sets up a further variation in possible syntactic arrangement and prepares the way for the creation of the poem's central metaphor, the blending of the two domains of writing and disease. That is, the "When" clause of lines 5–8 may be read, not as the ending of the first sentence, but as the beginning of the next. When it is read this way, the "When" again carries the possibility of causality as well as time, this time relating the only two intransitive verbs in the poem: when (if) the author lies, infection breeds.

Thus the form of the poem encourages "careless" mis-presentations of syntax at the same time as it encourages us to see the pun on "lie" as the word that has been dropped carelessly. Both meanings may thus be operative: the author lying in death is mapped onto the malaria lying dormant in the body; the lie created by the author becomes an infection breeding in the sentence. Either way, the word "lie," with its tense in the perpetual present, reinforces the notion that the "Word" that has been dropped carelessly lies always at the ready, ready to breed and infect, whenever we read the poem.

Iconicity works also across the dynamic schemas of situation, argument, and illocution. At the situational level, the structural pairings map the imagined world of the maker-author of words onto the actual world of the poet (Dickinson) and her readers. The generalized image of the Reference space (*a Word* / *a Page* / *an Eye*) maps on to the particular image of

the Presentation space (*the Maker* / *the sentence* / *the Malaria*). The pairings of the verbs link word to author (*dropped* / *folded*), author-word to infection (*lie* / *breeds*), and reader of the author's word to readers of the poet's word (*stimulate* / *inhale*). The author's feeling, which caused him to use a word without care or consideration, is "folded" into the page as he is "folded" in death, so that the feeling-trace of the word remains to "stimulate," to create a sensation in the reader through seeing the word. Through the dynamic schema of cause and effect, the sensation of seeing the word results in the transmission of feeling, so that the feeling that motivated the author's dropping of the word is identified by the poet as the idea of "Despair", and we as readers of her poem receive its semblance as we read the poem.

At the argumentational level, the dynamic schema is one of "causing harm". However, it was not the author's deliberate intention to cause harm to his reader. The word, after all, is dropped carelessly, without thought or consideration of the effect it might have. The pun on "lie" not only identifies author with word, it also suggests one side of the polarity that is set up by the situation: that careless words deceive or lie because they do not reflect the ethical obligation of a writer to take care, to capture truth. The feeling of despair that is communicated by the infected word is motivated by the negative polarity of the word "careless", represented by the metaphor of disease, that has infected the feeling of the author. Though authors die, the words they leave behind still carry the history of sensations and emotions with which they were first imbued. This latter argument – that words carry memory traces of emotion – moves the argumentational level from the semiotic world of the poem to the phenomenal world of poet and reader, since it is not the author's argument projected from the semiotic base space of his text, but the argument projected from the semiotic base space of the poet's.

In the virtual space of the blend, the word becomes the *symptom* of the infection breeding in the sentence that was *caused* by the maker-malaria and which can affect us as readers. The illocutionary force of the meaning of the blend is that authors are ethically responsible for the effect that their words may have on readers. As Dickinson noted in her letter to the Norcross sisters in which she included the first stanza: "We must be careful what we say. No bird resumes it's [*sic*] egg" (see note 15).

Iconicity also occurs at the illocutionary level (Haiman 1999; Tseng 2004).[20] An intriguing possibility arises from the embedding of the im-

20. I am grateful to one of the reviewers for these references.

agined scenario into the poem's scenario. In the imagined phenomenological world of the poem, there is no active illocutionary relationship between author and reader, since the author is long dead. In the poet's phenomenological world, the illocutionary force of her argument is that words can have a powerful effect, for good or ill, and that therefore "we must be careful what we say". Just as she identified herself with her readers in the iconic mapping of the two worlds, as "we" inhale despair from the author's word, so she identifies her readers with herself as potential authors who may also "say". The irony of the poem for us who read the poem today is that the poet, too, is "folded in perpetual seam" at "distances of centuries". The illocutionary force that exists in the poem arises from our emotional response to the feeling of "Despair" that the poet has made happen through an iconic semblance of the argument that carelessly used words can harm.

Words have histories. They leave memory traces. They acquire polarities, negative or positive. The authorial trace that is left on the words and sentences of discourse affects the way in which they are received, both in affect and meaning. The negative polarities of the words in Dickinson's poem (*careless, wrinkled, infection*, etc.) cumulate to provide the semblance of the ultimate affect on the reader, "Despair". The force dynamic schema in this poem is one of cause and effect, and as the metaphors of the schema blend feeling and form, image and diagram, the illocutionary effect is cautionary: beware of what you say.

Another Dickinson poem (F930*A*/J883) may serve as an antonym of her Malaria poem:

> The Poets light but
> Lamps -
> Themselves - go out -
> The Wicks they
> stimulate
> If vital Light
>
> Inhere as do the
> Suns -
> Each Age a Lens
> Disseminating their
> Circumference -

The poem conveys a similar idea – of words living after the poet that have power over their readers. Like the Malaria poem, it uses the same idea of

stimulation and also has a central line, "If vital Light," that is syntactically ambiguous and serves as a pivot between the five lines that precede and the five that follow it. However, the poem develops very different iconicities of form and feeling produced by a very different metaphor. Here, the image of light, associated with the positive polarities of illumination, understanding, and enlightenment, stands as a metaphor for poetry, instead of the negative polarity of infection and disease that carelessly dropped words can evoke. Both poems may be seen as a meditation on the nature of true art, art which captures what Burnside (2005: 61, 64) calls the *plemora* (fullness and plenitude, associated with the divine) in the quotidian, the bridging of the gap between sense and essence, the semblance of felt life. The first poem, ironically, successfully represents the results of *mis*-presenting the truths of the world, thus leading to disease and despair. The other speaks to the results of true presentation through the metaphor of light that, if "vital" (containing life in all its plenitude), will continue to radiate across the centuries.

Literary texts lend themselves to iconic presentations precisely because they engage in the particularities of experience, reflecting the concrete realities that arise from our feelings: our sense experiences and our emotions. These are transformed into the abstract conceptualizations of symbolic language through the processes of metaphor, image, and diagram. Because a poem exists only in the materiality of its language (its sounds, rhythms, meters, its morphology and syntax, etc.), in its physical appearance on the page (its stanzaic form, its line divisions, and so on), feeling is embodied within this materiality of the text. If we wish to explore the ways in which minding makes sense of our phenomenal world, then poetry is a natural place to turn.

Acknowledgment

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