'Da-DA-da-da-da': intonation and poetic form

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In the formal ferment of Modernism, and in the decades that followed, intonation was seen by many poets—particularly American ones—as a potentially valuable aspect of spoken English. Ezra Pound wondered in print as early as 1912 'whether there is in speech, as in music, "tone-leading"', and in the 'Cleaner's Manifesto' of 1948 was still enjoining poets to 'be vitally aware […] of melodic coherence, and the tone leading of vowels'.[1] Robert Frost had an equally longstanding interest in the formal relationship of intonation and metre, affirming in 1914 that 'the living part of a poem is the intonation entangled somehow in the syntax idiom and meaning of a sentence', and in 1939 that '[t]he possibilities for tune from the dramatic tones of meaning struck across the rigidity of a limited meter are endless'.[2] Intonation remained a live interest for the post-war poets of the so-called New American Poetry. Robert Duncan looked into linguistics in the belief that an

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[1] Ezra Pound, 'I Gather The Limbs of Osiris', X, On Music. *New Age* X.15 (8 Feb. 1912), pp. 343-4, reprinted in *Selected Prose 1909-1965*, ed. by William Cookson (London: Faber, 1973), p. 39; 'Cleaner's Manifesto', *Four Pages* (March 1948), p. 3, quoted in Robert J. Bertholf and Albert Gelpi, eds., *The Letters of Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. 806. Pound seems to be referring to the musical concept of a 'leading tone' (or 'leading note'), a note which is a semitone below the tonic and which invites resolution to it; applying this idea to language would imply that the pitches of spoken English create patterns and expectations of movement comparable to those of music.

[2] Robert Frost, letter to Sidney Cox, 19 Jan., 1914, in *Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays* (New York: Library of America, 1995), pp. 670-71 (p. 670), and 'The Figure A Poem Makes' (1939), in *Collected Poems, Prose, & Plays*, pp. 776-78 (p. 776).

understanding of pitch levels and other prosodic phenomena could help poets 'dr[a]w close to the graces and orders of actual speech',[3] while the strongest advocate of the formal potential of intonation was probably Allen Ginsberg, looking to Pound, to Jack Kerouac, and, in a Williamsesque gesture, to the patterns of everyday speech:

> So the key in American poetry that I got from Kerouac and that he got from Lucien Carr, was this pronunciation of the *tones* of key words in sentences. That comes somewhat from the exaggerated style of barroom conversation among newspaper reporters […] [T]here's a peculiarly aggressive, cynical quality to their conversation. So you get that rhythmic run of ba-ba-ba-BA-BA-ba. "Well, *you say* you heard that, but I don't believe that." "*You say* you saw that guy murder that guy I don't believe it." "*You say* you're innocent but I don't believe it." So you get a da-DA-da-da-da. So that actually provides a set of vocal tones which can be applied to emphasise the meaning of any sentence […] Ezra Pound has very interesting advice for poets: to "follow the tone leading of the vowels" […] [S]ince Pound, many American poets have been conscious of the tones, as well as the rhythm, in stress – da, da, da, da-da.[4]

Whether or not tone choice is the 'key in American poetry', Ginsberg's proposition that intonation is one of its central resources after Pound remains a powerful challenge to prosodists and critics, and one with which any reader interested in the possibilities of contemporary prosody—in particular of the prosody of non-metrical poetry—might wish to engage.

Over recent decades, considerable progress has been made in the understanding of rhythm, but other aspects of poetic sound remain elusive. This essay seeks to further the analysis of intonation as a possible constituent of poetic form. It begins by considering previous efforts to consider poetry in the light of intonation. It then examines some of the theoretical implications of a turn to intonation, considering what problems and advantages might be associated with using intonation to address

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[3] Robert Duncan, letter to Denise Levertov, Nov 1958, in *The Letters of Robert Duncan and Denise Levertov*, p. 150.

[4] 'Andrei Voznesensky and Allen Ginsberg: A Conversation', in *Beat Writers At Work: The Paris Review*, ed. by George Plimpton (New York: Modern Library, 1999), pp. 157-80 (p. 169). The conversation took place in December 1978.

poetic form, and what aspects of intonation might most productively be borne in mind as we read, hear and scan poems. It suggests, in particular, the use of the concepts of *key* and *paratone* as tools to explore how readers respond to the perceived discourse structure of poems. The second half of the essay explores two contrasting but powerful functions of intonation within non-metrical poetry: the bringing of discontinuity to the perception of apparently simple texts, and the bringing of a degree of coherence to that of apparently fragmentary ones. The first of these functions will be examined in relation to a passage by Allen Ginsberg; the second, to an extract from Ezra Pound's *Pisan Cantos*. In both cases, it will be argued that the analysis of intonation will allow readers to account, on a single and relatively straightforward level, for an important component of that sense of complex patterning to which non-metrical poetry can, like its metrical counterpart, give rise.

Intonational prosody
History, theory, problems

There is a long history of attempting to understand the role of intonation in poetry. As is regularly noted, it begins in 1775 with Joshua Steele's notation of the 'musical slides of the voice' in lines by Shakespeare, Milton, Pope and others, but its subsequent developments make this history richer than is sometimes thought.[5] Intonation enters prosodic debate in a sustained manner in the twentieth century, significantly aided by the invention of the phonograph. Drawing on the new technology, the phonetician E.W. Scripture, for example, identified what he called 'tone-rimes'—patterns of line-terminal rising and falling melodies—in a reading of lines by Robert Herrick.[6] Poets and linguists associated with or influenced by Russian Formalism also investigated intonation, with probably the most far-reaching theoretical explorations to be found in the work of the Prague school

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[5] Joshua Steele, *An Essay towards Establishing the Melody and Measure of Speech* (London: J. Almon, 1775), pp. 8, 13, 40-46, 77.

[6] E.W. Scripture, 'The Study of English Speech by New Methods of Phonetic Investigation', *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 10 (1921-23), pp. 271-299 (pp. 290-92). A more recent approach to this phenomenon can be found in Alan Holder, *Rethinking Meter: A New Approach to the Verse Line* (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press; London: Associated University Presses, 1995); see, in particular, Holder's reading of Sylvia Plath's 'Ariel' (pp. 229-33).

linguist and poetician Jan Mukařovský. His 'Intonation as the Basic Factor in Poetic Rhythm' (1933) argues that 'intonation alone frequently bears the burden of rhythmic organization in very free verse', notably because of the presence of 'a very expressive melodic formula at the end of each line'. In the case of metrical verse, Mukařovský postulates tension between the line's intonational structure—which he asserts to be systematically bipartite—and its metrical structure. Some of Mukařovský's assumptions now appear overstated, but the questions that he raised remain very interesting.[7]

These isolated analyses were succeeded by a more sustained series of studies once intonation had started, in the 1960s, to lose its status as the 'Cinderella of the linguistic sciences', and had begun to attract regular attention from linguists and phoneticians.[8] Seymour Chatman's *A Theory of Meter* (1965), for example, draws on the contours-based approach of the pioneering intonation specialist Dwight Bolinger, as well as on the work of Kenneth Pike and of Trager and Smith. Although Chatman's interest in pitch accents and contours is primarily focused on their consequences for metre, his redefinition of the phenomenon of enjambment in terms of pitch ('the extension of the intonational phrase, in performance, beyond the end of the line') is highly suggestive.[9] A few years later, the linguist David Crystal, whose historical account of the role of intonation in the analysis of poetry

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[7] Jan Mukařovský, 'Intonation as the Basic Factor in Poetic Rhythm', in *The Word and Verbal Art: Selected Essays by Jan Mukařovský*, trans. and ed. by John Burbank and Peter Steiner (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), pp. 116-33 (pp. 131, 118). Originally published in French as 'Intonation comme facteur de rythme poétique', *Archives néerlandaises de phonétique expérimentale*, 8-9 (1933), pp. 153-165.

[8] Alan Sharpe, 'Falling-Rising Intonation Patterns in English', *Phonetica*, 2 (1958), 127-52 (p. 151); quoted in David Crystal, *Prosodic Systems and Intonation in English* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), p. vii. Much of the new interest was elicited by the structuralist linguistics of George L. Trager and Henry Lee Smith, Jr, (*An Outline of English Structure*, Studies in Linguistics: Occasional Papers, III (Norman: Battenberg Press, 1951; repr. Washington, D.C.: American Council of Learned Societies, 1957)), to which, for example, both Seymour Chatman and Robert Duncan refer.

[9] Seymour Chatman, *A Theory of Meter* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), pp. 156-57. Alive to Roman Jakobson's distinction between 'verse instance' and 'delivery instance', and to the theoretical vulnerability of the kind of attention to performance that is implicit in his definition of enjambment, Chatman grounds his approach in the assumption that the verse instance is 'a sum or common denominator of all meaningful delivery instances' (p. 96).

remains very useful, argued forcefully for a reorientation of metrics towards intonation. For Crystal, 'the most important reason for the over-concentration on stress at the expense of intonation lies in the syllabic orientation of traditional and linguistic metrics', whereas the study of poetry—in particular free verse—would do better with a model with 'the notion of line, expounded by reference to the intonation contour and related prosodic features, as its basic element.'[10] Analysing recorded readings of texts by Gray, Wordsworth and Eliot, Crystal studied the relationship between tone unit (intonation-group) and line, finding a high rate of coincidence between printed lines and single tone units. Prudence Byers, in a series of studies, also worked with recorded readings, measuring the specificities of the intonational behaviour of poetry readers; her models would later be refined in the work of Ann Wichmann and Tom Barney.[11] G. Burns Cooper's *Mysterious Music* (1998), the fullest and best study so far of the place of intonation in English-language poetry, also worked with recordings, offering detailed acoustic and prosodic analysis of readings by poets themselves.[12] Other accounts of the topic attempted to connect texts directly to performances, building predictive models on the basis of linguistic theory; thus Rosemary Gates and Eleanor Berry both proposed intonation as a tool for the understanding of the prosody of William Carlos Williams, suggesting, in particular, that the intonation-group might be the basic unit of Williams's verse.[13]

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[10] David Crystal, 'Intonation and Metrical Theory', in *The English Tone of Voice: Essays in Intonation, Prosody and Paralanguage* (London: Edward Arnold, 1975), pp. 105-124 (pp. 116-18).

[11] Prudence P. Byers, 'A Formula for Poetic Intonation', *Poetics*, 8 (1979), pp. 367-80, and 'Intonation Prediction and the Sound of Poetry', *Language and Style*, 13 (1980), pp. 3-14; Anne Wichmann, 'Prosodic Style: A Corpus-Based Approach', in Gerry Knowles, Anne Wichmann, and Peter Alderson, eds., *Working with Speech: Perspectives on Research into the Lancaster / IBM Spoken English Corpus* (London: Longman, 1996), pp. 168-88; Tom Barney, 'Readers as Text Processors and Performers: A New Formula for Poetic Intonation', *Discourse Processes*, 28 (1999), pp. 155-67.

[12] G. Burns Cooper, *Mysterious Music: Rhythm and Free Verse* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

[13] Rosemary L. Gates, 'Forging An American Poetry From Speech Rhythms: Williams After Whitman', *Poetics Today*, 8 (1986), pp. 503-27; Eleanor Berry, 'William Carlos Williams' Triadic-Line Verse: An Analysis Of Its Prosody', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 35 (1989), pp. 364-388.

Despite some renewed recent attention, intonation-oriented studies of poetic form rarely, if ever, achieve influence beyond a readership of other intonational prosodists.[14] This failure may partly have to with difficulties of disciplinary practice. It is a challenge to combine literary and linguistic approaches to poetry, while to engage with a specifically intonational approach to literary prosody—a field of study which is itself often seen as an eccentric or marginal pursuit—requires a willingness to paddle in the backmost of backwaters. Yet there may also be more profound problems of method.

The first is epistemological. Do we, as prosodists and critics, have a good understanding of how texts are likely to be performed? It is sometimes assumed that we do not, and that attempts to predict the rhythm, yet alone the intonation, of non-metrical poetry read aloud is a hopeless task. This scepticism may be unjustified. At a very basic level, intonational behaviour is social, and shared among all speakers of a dialect; textbooks in phonetics can train students to transcribe the probable intonational characteristics of particular sentences without such training appearing futile. Intonation is also shared to a certain extent across dialects— General British and General American are, in this respect, similar.[15] Secondly, the undoubted variations on that behaviour that occur in a poetry-reading context— changes in probable tone choice, for example, or the specific treatment of line-

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[14] Studies published since 2000 include Patrick Dunn, '"What If I Sang": The Intonation of Allen Ginsberg's Performances', *Style*, 41 (2007), pp. 75-93; Natalie Gerber, 'Getting the "Squiggly Tunes Down" on the Page: Williams's Triadic-Line Verse and American Intonation', in *Rigor of Beauty: Essays in Commemoration of William Carlos Williams*, ed. by Ian D. Copestake (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2004), pp. 221-53, and 'Intonation and the Conventions of Free Verse', *Style*, 49 (2015), pp. 8-34; Lacy Rumsey, 'Form before Genre: "Free Verse" and Contemporary British Poetry', *Études britanniques contemporaines*, 26 (2004), pp. 73-91, 'Describing Shape in the Poetry of J.H. Prynne: Rhythm and Intonation in "Again in the Black Cloud"', *Études britanniques contemporaines*, 39 (2010), pp. 109-127, and 'The Obstinate Reader: Prynne, Prosody and Degrees of Engagement', *Thinking Verse* I (2011), pp. 44-66.

[15] 'Differences between GB and GA are relatively limited; differences between GB and that of a number of northern British cities are considerable.' Alan Cruttenden, *Gimson's Pronunciation of English*, 8th edn. (London: Routledge, 2014), p. 277. Basil Bunting's assertions of the intonational specificity of Northern English poets such as himself are, in consequence, probably well founded. Statements of the supposed incapability of British ears to appreciate William Carlos Williams on the grounds of dialectal differences in intonation, as opposed to differences in literary culture, appear less convincing.

break—are amenable to analysis via work on corpuses of readings or recordings. Such analyses exist, but leave room for considerable further study and innovation; for instance, a large corpus analysis of how readers of contemporary poetry treat line-break—whether pause is used; whether an intonation boundary is marked; how such decisions vary depending on the author of the poem being read—would be a fascinating project. Thirdly, if the attitudinal pragmatics of a given literary text may be far from self-evident, the ways in which they may be construed by readers are, of course, open to discussion and debate. In this respect, the work of prosody needs to include an engagement with criticism and theory. When Robert Frost argues that:

> The visual images thrown up by a poem are important, but it is more important still to choose and arrange words in a sequence so as virtually to control the intonations and pauses of the reader's voice.[16]

the term 'control' may, of course, be judged too emphatic. However, that the way in which poets 'choose and arrange words' has great influence on readers' intonational behaviour, as on other aspects of their response to poetry, is surely uncontroversial.

With an adequate understanding of the factors just described, it is possible, therefore, to distinguish more and less representative or probable performance decisions, and to offer intonational scansions that appeal not just to the prosodist's or critic's sense of the shape and interpretation of a particular line or passage—though the development and communication of that sense remain, of course, necessary and desirable—but also to the reasoned use of a substantial body of knowledge. Such a scansion will not seek to be authoritative, but neither will it be purely idiosyncratic; it may best be considered as an informed invitation to discussion and debate.

This approach to intonational scansion might also permit prosodists to avoid resorting to the authority of recordings of the poets themselves. Scanning on the basis of recordings replaces the reader-text relation with a listener-recording model

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[16] Sterling Bowen, 'A Poet on the Campus of the University of Michigan', *Detroit News*, 27 November 1921, p. A7, quoted in Robert Bernard Hass, '(Re) Reading Bergson: Frost, Pound and the Legacy of Modern Poetry', *Journal of Modern Literature,* 29.1 (2005), pp. 55-75 (p. 66).

that is of legitimate interest, and which can be useful for particular purposes, but which can do nothing to explain the experience of reading—an experience to which many are, to say the least, still very attached. Nor should prosody feel obliged to defer to the typically normative methods of phonological theory in the generativist tradition, an enterprise which, in search of general models rather than readings, has different goals to those of literary prosody.

The second potential problem is analytical. If we assume that we can, indeed, offer an account or prediction of the intonation patterns that may be induced in readers by texts (and contexts), what can we actually derive from this knowledge? A certain prudence and scepticism are necessary here, as well as a paying of attention to the *multiple* causative factors behind intonation decisions. If, for example, we look only at how intonation is mapped onto attitude, then we run a strong risk of circular argument: in such and such a line, the poem conveys great emotion; the nuclear pitch accents are likely to be high; this reinforces the sense of emotion. Such an argument may be true in a given case, but its added analytical value will be minor. If, on the other hand, we look only at syntax, there is a serious risk of redundancy: syntax may not be significantly easier to describe than intonation, but it is much less open to argument, and if the two systems equated there would be a strong case for privileging syntax. Instead, we must, as noted above, look at a wide range of influences: syntax, discourse and rhetorical structure, attitude, lineation, layout, and recitation preferences in given groups or communities of readers. Indeed, intonation may be the ideal analytical level on which to consider the formal consequences of a whole variety of phenomena that influence the reader's derivation of an utterance, and a form, from a written text.[17]

The third possible problem is evaluative or pragmatic: assuming that we can describe these forms, why would we want to? The kinds of poetic form to which readers are most accustomed are made of relatively resilient stuff: metre (which was,

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[17] As I have argued elsewhere (Rumsey, 'Describing shape', pp. 110-11), intonation also permits the description of form in cases where the reader does not feel confident of a poem's total information structure; the need for confidence in this respect appears to be a weakness of the phrasal analysis brilliantly developed by Richard Cureton.

for Wimsatt and Beardsley, 'always there') is typically available to any reader of a poem who has native-speaker competence in stress patterns and an ear for rhythm, while a poem's visual shape is immovably present on the page.[18] If we need to consider intonation in order to understand a poem's form, might that form not be somehow insubstantial or inadequate? One response to such a challenge is that intonation may function in poetry as part of an overall palette of formal effects; it need not be assumed that it must carry all of a poem's formal burden alone. A more complex response will be to point out that the possible fragility of intonation as a vehicle for poetic form is a problem for criticism, and for poetics, more than it is for prosody, whose primary role in such a debate should be to provide a greater sense of what poetry in English can achieve, and has achieved. Poetry in English since Modernism has largely eschewed the use of stable, instantly recognisable inherited forms, and although some poets of this tradition have at bottom been relatively uninterested in prosody—as has, of course, always been true of some metrical poets, too—then others have genuinely sought to create what William Carlos Williams called '[a] world of sound in which things occur in unused relationships.'[19] Since intonation was, for some poets, very much part of this ambition, it is prosody's job to help us understand how it may have operated, and may continue to operate, in those complex interactions between reader and text that give rise to the perception of form.

Concepts and notations

Alan Cruttenden, one of the principal British specialists in the phonetics of intonation, has described its three main functions as follows:

> The acoustic manifestation of intonation is fundamental frequency, which is perceived by listeners as pitch. Pitch changes in English have three principal

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[18] W.K. Wimsatt, Jr, and Monroe C. Beardsley, 'The Concept of Meter: An Exercise in Abstraction', *PMLA*, 74 (1959), pp. 585-98 (p. 592).

[19] Letter to Louis Zukofsky, 18 January 1931, in *The Correspondence of William Carlos Williams and Louis Zukofsky*, ed. by Barry Ahearn (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2003), p. 78. Williams writes 'realtionships' for 'relationships'.

functions: (i) they signal the division of utterances into intonational phrases […]; (ii) they signal syllables with primary and secondary accent, both in the citation of isolated words […] and in the longer utterances of speech; (iii) the shape of the tunes produced by pitch changes can carry various types of meaning, primarily discoursal (i.e. establishing the links between various parts of utterances) and attitudinal.[20]

Each of these three aspects of intonation has formal potential within poetry, some of which has been investigated by the studies described above. The chunking of language into intonational phrases or intonation-groups—usually called *tonality*—is the focus of the studies by Crystal and Berry. Attention to *tonicity*—the placement of pitch accents, particularly the nuclear accent, the most important syllable of each intonation-group—may help us to gain a finer understanding of rhythm than if we simply treat all prominences as undifferentiated 'stress'; this was the postulate of Chatman's *Theory of Meter*. Finally, *tone*—the 'tunes' of intonation, occurring primarily in the nucleus—though clearly not functioning in the same way as musical melody, nonetheless opens up possibilities for patterning, either in the kind of minimal genre- and structure-signalling manner hypothesised by Mukařovský, or in creating the more elaborate 'tone-rimes' described by Service and Holder.

In this study, I shall be including discussion of two of these three aspects of intonation. One is tonality—the placement of intonation-group boundaries. Tonality offers a fundamental tool for the description of the internal segmentation of a poem in oral performance. It is thus crucial in grouping, which is a fundamental component of rhythm and of form more generally, as music theory—and in the field of poetics the work of Richard Cureton—has demonstrated. The other is tone—the choice of pitch movement on the most important syllable in the intonation-group, the nucleus. It would probably be imprudent for prosodists to attempt to base analysis on the whole available gamut of nuclear tone choice—even though it can be interesting to include a suggestion of that detail in scansions—since the risk of variability between speakers, notably in relation to attitude, is likely to undermine any analysis of form that depends on, say, a speaker's choice of a fall-rise rather than a rise. More stable, and thus a more solid basis for the analysis of

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[20] Cruttenden, *Gimson's Pronunciation*, p. 277.

form, is the fundamental distinction between *falling* and *non-falling* tones. Falling tones (fall and rise-fall) are associated with discoursal finality; non-falling tones (rise, fall-rise, level), with dependence and non-finality, or, in the case of level tones, with a ritual or semi-ritual context such as that implied by the more incantatory styles of poetry-reading. Since readers' perceptions of discourse structure are closely linked to the poem's text, the intonational decisions that result from these perceptions are likely to remain relatively stable across readers and readings. In certain circumstances, it will also be productive to consider the distinction between high and low nuclear tones, which are associated with, respectively, greater and lesser degrees of speaker involvement. Again, in order to restrict prediction and analysis to relatively stable phenomena, it appears important to hypothesise the degree of speaker involvement, and thus the height of nuclear tones, only on the basis of fixed textual factors such as punctuation.[21]

However, it is also worth looking beyond 'the three Ts' of tonality, tonicity and tone, in particular to permit the examination of stretches of spoken text that are longer than a single intonation-group.[22] Speakers' choice of pitch height for the first pitch accent of each intonation-group—its *onset*—signals the discoursal relations between each group and its predecessor; a consideration of this phenomenon, known as *key*, will add considerable sophistication to our ability to analyse grouping *within* sequences of intonation-groups. Likewise, via an analysis of the relationship between onset height and other phenomena such as pause, the relations *between*

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[21] This paragraph repeats arguments made in Rumsey, 'Describing shape', p. 112. The assertion that "the most basic distinction among English nuclear tones is that between falling and non-falling" can be found in J.C. Wells, *English Intonation: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 15. On level tones and ritualised utterance in poetry reading, see Wichmann, pp. 185-87, and David Brazil, 'Listening to People Reading', in *Advances in Spoken Discourse Analysis*, ed. Malcolm Coulthard (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 209-41 (pp. 214-15, 234-36). On pitch height and speaker involvement, see e.g. Alan Cruttenden, *Intonation*, 2nd edn. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 51; Wells, p. 218.

[22] The expression 'beyond the three Ts' is J.C. Wells's (p. 207). As far as I know, the only published work to engage in detail with the poetic use of one of the phenomena described in this paragraph is Patrick Dunn, '"What If I Sang"', which analyses Allen Ginsberg's use of paratone in his recorded readings. There are brief references to paratone and key in Natalie Gerber, 'Intonation and the Conventions of Free Verse', pp. 11, 18-19.

longer sequences—known as *paratones*—are opened up for analysis. All of these concepts are given further brief explanation in the discussion which follows, which draws, for its concepts and most of its scansion marks, on the British nuclear-tone tradition represented by phoneticians such as Alan Cruttenden and John Wells.[23] For the sake of accuracy and consistency, all illustrative examples are drawn from studies in phonetics and linguistics; examples from poetry are reserved for the discussion that follows.

The intonation-group

The intonation-group—also called intonational phrase or tone unit—is the basic 'chunk' of speech. Such 'chunks' are sometimes said to correspond to the stages of information processing through which the brain passes as speech is prepared and uttered; as such, they reflect syntactic, semantic and pragmatic priorities. The intonation-group is defined phonetically, using one necessary internal cue—the presence of at least one pitch accent—and several possible external cues, occurring at the boundaries of the intonation-group: boundaries may be marked, for example, by anacrusis (speeding-up) at the beginning of an intonation-group, and pause at the end. The division into intonation-groups of a text read aloud may be predicted—with, of course, a degree of provisionality—on the basis of a range of features including syntax, discourse structure and punctuation, as well as, in the context of poetry, line-break.

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[23] Other systems of transcribing intonation exist, notably ToBI (Tones and Break Indices), developed for American English (and used, for example, in Anne Wennerstrom, *The Music of Everyday Speech: Prosody and Discourse Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), and IViE (Intonational Variation in English), a derivation of ToBI developed in the UK. ToBI analyses intonation as a sequence of high and low tones labelled H and L, with pitch accents indicated by asterisks, and other details by plus, minus and percentage signs. The transitions between tones are not notated, in contrast to the contours of the 'British' tradition. Though there are theoretical differences between the ToBI and 'British' systems, notably in relation to intonation-group boundaries, these are not crucial in a non-specialist context. The greater iconicity of contour-based notation constitutes, on the other hand, a distinct advantage, and it is used here for that reason.

In scansion, the boundaries of predicted intonation-groups are marked by bars: |. Two bars (||) may be used when a boundary is thought likely to be accompanied by a marked pause, for example at the end of a sentence:

|| He turned round, | and a strange sight confronted him. ||[24]

Tone choice

A speaker's choice of nuclear tone—that is, of the main pitch movement within each intonation-group—communicates his or her sense of discourse relations within the utterance, and/or his or her attitude towards it. The British tradition of intonational analysis posits a basic repertoire of five tones in spoken English: *rise* /, *fall* \, *fall-rise* v, *rise-fall* ^ and *level* >.[25] These marks are placed before the nuclear syllable, which is underlined:

|| She said it was \<u>wrong</u>, | but v<u>he</u> | said it was \<u>right</u>. ||[26]

If the detail of tone choice is unimportant to a particular scansion, these tonal marks can be replaced by a simple ' mark:

|| She said it was '<u>wrong</u>, | but '<u>he</u> | said it was '<u>right</u>. ||

As noted above, the distinction between high and low rises and falls, associated respectively with greater and lesser degrees of speaker involvement, may also, on occasions, be useful to scansion. In such cases, H or L may be placed before the tonal mark. This method departs from the notations used by Wells and others—which place the tonal marks in superscript and subscript respectively—for reasons of ease of reading.

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[24] Wells, p. 194 (notation adapted).

[25] The notion of a 'basic repertoire', and the repertoire given here, are simplifications. Some taxonomies (e.g. Cruttenden, *Intonation*, pp. 50-54) include seven tones, through treating high and low rises and falls as distinct. For the purposes of scansion, this distinction will be treated, instead, as an option, to be called upon when finer degrees of detail are required. Wells adopts a simpler basic model of three tones (fall, rise, and fall-rise), rising to nine when finer detail is required (p. 259).

[26] Wells, p. 133 (notation adapted).

| | H\<u>Wo</u>nderful! | |[27]

Key

If intonation-groups form the basic building-blocks of the utterance, it is the speaker's pitch choice at the beginning of each group—specifically, in uttering its first prominent syllable, the onset—that is thought to signal the relationship between groups. This pitch choice, which is usually referred to as *key*, serves to communicate the relationship between each intonation-group and its predecessor. A high key choice suggests that the intonation-group will give a new orientation— a new topic, for example—to the speaker's discourse. A mid-level key choice suggests the continuation of the orientation included in the previous intonation-group. Low key, finally, suggests a relationship of subordination between the new group and its predecessor.

No single way of indicating key is generally used. For the purposes of scanning poems, it may be notated by the use of **h**, **m**, or **l** at the start of the intonation-group:

| | **m** Only a small number of people – | | **l** something like half – | | **m** actually turned up. | |

In this example, the low key of the second intonation-group serves to show that the meaning in this context of *a small number* is about to be parenthetically explained; that 'something like half' is not a new element in the narrative.[28]

Paratone

First postulated in 1973, and explored by many linguists subsequently, paratones are sequences of intonation-groups that communicate the discoursal structure of the utterance. As their name suggests, paratones play a similar role in speech to

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[27] Wells, p. 216 (notation adapted).

[28] Example and explanation from David Brazil, *The Communicative Value of Intonation in English*, 2nd edn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 160; notation adapted.

paragraphs in prose. They are characterised by 'downdrift', a gradual fall in the speaker's basic pitch level, and may be defined by a terminal boundary cue: a fall to low in the speaker's pitch range.[29]

The character and function of each paratone are defined by the key of its first intonation-group: in other words, key choice signals relationships between paratones just as it does those between individual intonation-groups. High key signals a new conceptual orientation within the utterance; mid key pursues the orientation of the preceding paratone; low key marks a parenthetical or subordinate addition to the preceding paratone. Two levels of paratone have been postulated: the *minor paratone*, which may begin with high, mid or low key; and the *major paratone*, which begins with high key and includes all of the minor paratones that follow until the next major paratone.

Paratones can be scanned using the marks which were suggested for the use of key - the letters *h*, *m,* and *l.* Where an intonation-group follows a low termination, and a new minor paratone therefore begins, the letter denoting key will be capitalised. The boundaries of paratone can be marked by three bars: |||. An example can be taken from the work of the phonetician Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, with these notations added:

||| **H** the former Labour cabinet minister | Mr Tony Benn | has called for a reduction | in what he called the excessive powers | of British Prime Ministers |||

M Mr Benn | in a speech in Bristol | said the powers of the Prime Minister | combined with the job of party leader | were so great | that they amounted | to a system of personal rule |||

L he said the Prime Minister | should be made more accountable |||

M among other things | Labour MPs | should elect all Labour spokesmen in Parliament | and Cabinet ministers in Government |||

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[29] Extended discussion of paratone can be found in Wennerstrom, pp. 100-117.

> **M** and Mr Benn added | that the patronage in power | of the office of Prime Minister | should be reduced | to avoid the present | centralization of power | in the hands of one person | | | [30]

Five minor paratones combine in this passage, and together make up a major paratone. Couper-Kuhlen explains their function in accordance with the principles given above. The only high-onset minor paratone signals the beginning of the major paratone, corresponding as a whole to the first major 'chunk' of a news item; the three mid-onset minor paratones contain material that expand upon or add to the information given in the preceding minor paratone; the only low-onset minor paratone has the function of a parenthetical explanation, subordinate to the material that has immediately preceded it.

On the basis of her results, Couper-Kuhlen argues that:

> the role of intonation in the segmentation and hierarchical organization of texts can […] be regarded as provisionally established.[31]

Paratone offers criticism the possibility of analysing this organization at three distinct levels (intonation-group < minor paratone < major paratone). Given the importance of the role played by segmentation and grouping in poetic and musical form, this is potentially very valuable.

Tonicity and other forms of prominence
As noted above, nuclear pitch accents are denoted via underlining, and via a tonetic mark placed immediately before the syllable—or, where no tone is specified, via a ' . The same mark—without the underlining—is used to signal other pitch accents within the intonation-group:

> | | I'd 'like a 'gin and '<u>ton</u>ic. | |[32]

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[30]Adapted from Elizabeth Couper-Kuhlen, *An Introduction to English Prosody* (London: Edward Arnold, 1986), pp. 193-94.

[31] Couper-Kuhlen, p. 195.

[32] Wells, p. 109.

Prominences which are thought likely to be signalled by non-intonational means such as duration, loudness or position in rhythmic sequence are marked ° :

|| I 'ran all the °way to the \underline{station} ||[33]

Few prosodists would want to build a formal analysis on the prediction that a particular syllable will be made prominent though particular means; yet this level of detail has the advantage of allowing patterns of pitch accents, and particularly of nuclear accents—which may well form the basis of particular rhythmic sequences—to be clearly grasped.

Poems and scansions: Ginsberg and Pound

If setting out a full range of notations for intonational prosody can be a laborious exercise, its aim, of course, is that of facilitating the understanding of poems. In the remainder of this essay, poems by Allen Ginsberg and Ezra Pound will be discussed, in order both to offer an account of their construction of shape or form, and to explore the hypothesis that intonational prosody can reveal important, and hitherto overlooked, aspects of that form.

Reading Ginsberg / patterning repetition

One of the reproaches sometimes made of Allen Ginsberg's work is that of formal repetitiveness, on the grounds, notably, of its reliance on anaphora. In a sceptical account of the first section of 'Howl', Paul Breslin argues:

> The incantatory syntax […] draws attention to the poem as speech rather than as an object for contemplation […] Moreover, the syntactical complexities one associates with nuance are missing. There is little variety of sentence construction and, therefore, little complexity in the relations among words. To say this is not necessarily to condemn the poem, which aims at force, not subtlety. But the effect of the steady accumulation of parallel subordinate clauses goes beyond the suggestion of passionate speech. Like the catalogue passages in Whitman, the first section of 'Howl' implies by its syntax a view of reality: the many parts of the world simply exist, next to each other, without conflict and without hierarchy

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[33] Cruttenden, *Intonation*, p. 18 (notation adapted). The ° mark is proposed in Wells, p. 260.

of greater and lesser, and they are unified not by complex relations among the parts, but by a simple and all-embracing relation between any part and the whole.[34]

To restrict this kind of analysis to a poem's syntax, without looking at the intonational implications of that syntax and indeed of the poem's semantics, is to cut oneself off from the ways in which the poem is actually experienced as *speech*. A repetitive syntax does not necessarily imply an absence of complexity in the relations between words, nor a simple and all-embracing relation between part and whole. It may simply be the case that the reader must work harder to find that complexity.

For reasons of space, this essay will not consider 'Howl', but part of a shorter and simpler poem by Ginsberg: 'Improvisation in Beijing', written in 1984 and included in the 1994 collection *Cosmopolitan Greetings*. It is highly anaphoric, like 'Howl', and on publication was found by the *Hudson Review* to be a 'typical repetitive rant'.[35] It may not, to be sure, be Ginsberg's best poem, but its simplicity provides a useful illustration of how intonation, cued by a poem's text, can confer *pattern* on what is at first glance no more than a *series*. It is particularly useful for the purposes of this analysis in that I know of no recording of Ginsberg reading this poem: it is thus up to readers to make and justify the performance decisions.

My analysis will concentrate on the first fourteen of its forty-four lines:

> I write poetry because the English word Inspiration comes from Latin
> *Spiritus*, breath, I want to breathe freely.
> I write poetry because Walt Whitman gave world permission to speak with
> candor.
> I write poetry because Walt Whitman opened up poetry's verse-line for
> unobstructed breath.
> I write poetry because Ezra Pound saw an ivory tower, bet on one wrong
> horse, gave poets permission to write spoken vernacular idiom.
> I write poetry because Pound pointed young western poets to look at
> Chinese writing word pictures.

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[34] Paul Breslin, *The Psycho-Political Muse: American Poetry since the Fifties* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 24-25.
[35] John Haines, 'Poetry Chronicle', *Hudson Review*, 48 (1996), pp. 663-71 (p. 668).

> I write poetry because W.C. Williams living in Rutherford wrote New
> Jerseyesque "I kick yuh eye," asking, how measure that in iambic
> pentameter?
> I write poetry because my father was poet my mother from Russia spoke
> Communist, died in a mad house.
> I write poetry because young friend Gary Snyder sat to look at his thoughts
> as part of external phenomenal world just like a 1984 conference
> table.
> I write poetry because I suffer, born to die, kidneystones and high blood
> pressure, everybody suffers.
> I write poetry because I suffer confusion not knowing what other people
> think.
> I write because poetry can reveal my thoughts, cure my paranoia also other
> people's paranoia.
> I write poetry because my mind wanders subject to sex politics Bud-
> dhadharma meditation.
> I write poetry to make accurate picture my own mind.
> I write poetry because I took Bodhisattva's Four Vows: Sentient creatures
> to liberate are numberless in the universe, my own greed anger
> ignorance to cut thru's infinite, situations I find myself in are
> countless as the sky okay, while awakened mind path's endless.[36]

We can focus on two aspects of the intonation of this text when read aloud. The first is paratone: the higher-level intonational units that group intonation-groups together, and signal discourse structure through key choice. As described above, the major topical orientations of a text—its 'conceptual paragraphs'—are signalled by major paratones, in which the pitch level of the onset, or first rhythmically prominent syllable of the major paratone, is high. The subdivisions within that 'conceptual paragraph', and thus within the major paratone, are signalled by minor paratones: these are pitch sequences whose onset height is placed at one of three levels. Those which begin high are those which begin new major paratones; those which begin at mid-level are those which represent paratactic additions to or extensions of material presented in the previous paratone; and those which begin

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[36] Allen Ginsberg, *Cosmopolitan Greetings: Poems 1986-1992* (New York: HarperCollins; London: Penguin, 1994), pp. xiii-xv (pp. xiii-xiv).

low represent hypotactic subordinations to or inclusions in the material presented in the previous paratone.

In reading 'Improvisation in Beijing', it is safe to assume that, since line-break and syntax are perfectly aligned in every line, with a full stop to close, each will close with a fall to low pitch and pause. In such a reading, every line will correspond to a new minor paratone.

|||I write poetry because the English word Inspiration comes from Latin *Spiritus*, breath, I want to breathe freely. |||
I write poetry because Walt Whitman gave world permission to speak with candor. |||
I write poetry because Walt Whitman opened up poetry's verse-line for unobstructed breath. |||
I write poetry because Ezra Pound saw an ivory tower, bet on one wrong horse, gave poets permission to write spoken vernacular idiom. |||
I write poetry because Pound pointed young western poets to look at Chinese writing word pictures. |||
I write poetry because W.C. Williams living in Rutherford wrote New Jerseyesque "I kick yuh eye," asking, how measure that in iambic pentameter? |||
I write poetry because my father was poet my mother from Russia spoke Communist, died in a mad house. |||
I write poetry because young friend Gary Snyder sat to look at his thoughts as part of external phenomenal world just like a 1984 conference table. |||
I write poetry because I suffer, born to die, kidneystones and high blood pressure, everybody suffers. |||
I write poetry because I suffer confusion not knowing what other people think. |||
I write because poetry can reveal my thoughts, cure my paranoia also other people's paranoia. |||
I write poetry because my mind wanders subject to sex politics Buddhadharma meditation. |||
I write poetry to make accurate picture my own mind. |||
I write poetry because I took Bodhisattva's Four Vows: Sentient creatures to liberate are numberless in the universe, my own greed anger ignorance to cut thru's infinite, situations I find myself in are countless as the sky okay, while awakened mind path's endless. |||

Apart from the much greater length of the fourteenth minor paratone, this appears very repetitive. What brings variety, and potentially a sense of pattern are the pitch choices the speaker will make: and these choices are, to a significant extent, cued by the text.

The first line of the poem must, in the absence of any contrary cues, be deemed to signal a major new topical orientation. It is therefore likely to be performed with a high onset on its first prominent syllable— 'I'. This opens the poem's first major paratone, signalled by **H**:

> | | | **H** I write poetry | | because the English word Inspiration | comes from Latin *Spiritus*, | | breath, | | I want to breathe freely. | | |[37]

For simplicity's sake, my scansions do not indicate key choice within the line, and will indicate accents and tone only when relevant.

In coming to l. 2, and for the reasons suggested above beginning a new minor paratone, the speaker has a choice. The line adds information to the opening proposition, by stating another motivation for the poet's work; as such, it may be pitched so as to continue the major paratone begun in l. 1, with a mid-level onset on 'I' signalling its status as addition or extension:

> | | | **H** I write poetry | | because the English word Inspiration | comes from Latin *Spiritus*, | | breath, | | I want to breathe freely. | | |
> **M** I write poetry | | because Walt Whitman | gave world permission to speak with candor. | | |

Alternatively, it may be interpreted as signalling a new topical orientation, on the same level of importance within the discourse as l. 1. On this interpretation, every reason which the poem gives for its own existence, at least at this stage of proceedings, is of the highest interest. If this is the performance choice adopted, l. 2 will begin a new major paratone, signalled in scansion by another **H**:

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[37] With scansion marks added, modification of the layout of wrap-around lines is sometimes unavoidable.

||| **H** I write poetry || because Walt Whitman | gave world permission to speak with candor. |||

Even if we adopt the second solution, it would be difficult to make the same case for high paratone in l. 3, since the line includes words that are directly repeated from l. 2: 'because Walt Whitman'. To begin a third major paratone in l. 3 would thus be to lose touch with discourse structure altogether. In an attentive reading, the repeated words 'because Walt Whitman' are, instead, likely to be subsumed within a larger intonation-group, with the nuclear pitch accent shifting rightwards towards the new material. The following scansion makes clear the differences in this respect between l. 2 and l. 3:

||| 'I write \p<u>oe</u>try || be°cause 'Walt \<u>Whit</u>man | gave 'world per\<u>miss</u>ion | to 'speak with \<u>can</u>dor. |||
'I write \p<u>oe</u>try || be°cause Walt 'Whitman °opened up 'poetry's \<u>verse</u>-line | for unob'structed \<u>breath</u>. |||

Line 3 is here in a subordinate relationship to l. 2; this will imply a low key choice for its first intonation-group, with a low pitch level on 'I', and in consequence a low-onset minor paratone. The complete scansion of lines 1-3 is thus as follows:

|||**H** 'I write \p<u>oe</u>try || be°cause the 'English word Inspi\<u>ra</u>tion | °comes from 'Latin *<u>Spiritus</u>*, || \<u>breath</u>, || I 'want to 'breathe \<u>free</u>ly. |||
H 'I write \p<u>oe</u>try || be°cause 'Walt \<u>Whit</u>man | gave 'world per\<u>miss</u>ion | to 'speak with \<u>can</u>dor. |||
L 'I write \p<u>oe</u>try || be°cause Walt 'Whitman °opened up 'poetry's \<u>verse</u>-line | for unob'structed \<u>breath</u>. |||

A notation of the paratones found in all of the poem's opening 14 lines, with the detail of individual intonation-groups omitted, can now be proposed:

|||**H** I write poetry because the English word Inspiration comes from Latin *Spiritus*, breath, I want to breathe freely. |||
H I write poetry because Walt Whitman gave world permission to speak with candor. |||
L I write poetry because Walt Whitman opened up poetry's verse-line for unobstructed breath. |||

> **M** I write poetry because Ezra Pound saw an ivory tower, bet on one wrong horse, gave poets permission to write spoken vernacular idiom. | | |
> **L** I write poetry because Pound pointed young western poets to look at Chinese writing word pictures. | | |
> **M** I write poetry because W.C. Williams living in Rutherford wrote New Jerseyesque "I kick yuh eye," asking, how measure that in iambic pentameter? | | |
> **H** I write poetry because my father was poet my mother from Russia spoke Communist, died in a mad house. | | |
> **M** I write poetry because young friend Gary Snyder sat to look at his thoughts as part of external phenomenal world just like a 1984 conference table. | | |
> **M** I write poetry because I suffer, born to die, kidneystones and high blood pressure, everybody suffers. | | |
> **M** I write poetry because I suffer confusion not knowing what other people think. | | |
> **L** I write because poetry can reveal my thoughts, cure my paranoia also other people's paranoia. | | |
> **M** I write poetry because my mind wanders subject to sex politics Buddhadharma meditation. | | |
> **M** I write poetry to make accurate picture my own mind. | | |
> **H** I write poetry because I took Bodhisattva's Four Vows: Sentient creatures to liberate are numberless in the universe, my own greed anger ignorance to cut thru's infinite, situations I find myself in are countless as the sky okay, while awakened mind path's endless. | | |

The decisions taken in this reading can be interpreted in terms both of the affective or informational weight of different lines, and of the performative and communicative needs of the speaker. For example, the repeated signalling of a new topic via high key can probably not be maintained without fatiguing both speaker and listener, and so the 'default' onset level becomes that of a mid-level minor paratone, as in lines 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 13. The introduction of a new major paratone is reserved for those lines which seem to follow the closing of a particular kind of material, or to contain material of particular weight within the poem. Thus, the high onset on l. 7 signals a turn away from the acknowledgement of poetic forebears towards more intimate material; that on l. 14 responds to the great length of the line, and thus to the inference that it constitutes a particularly important

moment in its encouragement to readers to see the poem within a predominantly religious context.[38]

At other points in this performance, it has been decided to treat a line as subordinate to its predecessor; thus, the second mention of Ezra Pound, in l. 5, causes that line to be treated as a hypotactic, low-onset paratone, as was the case for the second mention of Whitman, earlier in the poem. Again, the deaccenting of repeated material will reinforce the effect of the choice of low tone. This is a strategy repeated several times within this passage—lines 9-11 are a sophisticated example:

> | | | **M** 'I write \poetry | because I \suffer, | born to \die, | 'kidneystones and 'high \blood °pressure, | \everybody °suffers. | | |
> **M** I write 'poetry because I 'suffer con\fusion | not 'knowing what 'other people \think. | | |
> **L** I \write | because 'poetry can re'veal \my °thoughts, | 'cure my 'paran\oia | 'also 'other \people's paran°oia. | | |

Here again, the repetition of material, and its subtle alteration, enables patterns of accenting and deaccenting to follow, for example, the shifts in the use of the item *suffer*, from a first-person intransitive, through third-person intransitive, to first person transitive (ll. 9-10); or in the topic 'thought', from third-person verb in l. 10, to noun associated with the first person in l. 11; and in the association of *paranoia* with the first person, and then with the third. These mutations contribute to the effectiveness of the poem's universalist rhetoric, enclosing self and others within a restricted syntactic and lexical compass; they also make for a very attractive shape, in the series of intonational contrasts to which they give rise. These can be illustrated in the simplified scansions below, in which no tone choice is specified for the nuclear syllables; what is striking is the way in which the lines' subtle alterations cause the location of the nucleus to shift from one segment to another:

> I 'suffer
> 'everybody suffers.

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[38] It would equally be possible to understand such a topical reorientation as having taken place slightly earlier, given l. 12's mention of 'Buddhadharma meditation'. This would give rise to a paratone sequence of H M M, rather than M M H, over the last three lines of the extract.

> I suffer con'<u>fus</u>ion
>
> other people '<u>think</u>
> '<u>my</u> thoughts
>
> my paran'<u>oia</u>
> other '<u>peop</u>le's paranoia.

At the same time, the use of paratone to suggest the relationships between lines binds these lines together, expressing both their relatedness (all are in the same major paratone) and their interdependence (the low minor paratone of l. 11 denotes its subordination to l. 12).

Having identified paratone as a possible resource in this poem, and by implication in other long-line poems, the question of its formal potential is raised. Line by line, they are likely to be of the sort identified above: binding some groups of lines together, separating others, and providing a ground against which other, more local intonational effects stand out. However, it is in their pervasion of the poem as a whole that paratones may be of most interest. The overlaying of a varying, but coherent pattern of pitch movement onto an unchanging syntactical base has powerful perceptual and cognitive possibilities; these seem to have something of the relationship between rhythm and metre in a metrical poem. The sentence type *I write poetry because…* is repeated, in 'Improvisation in Beijing', with such regularity as to an acquire a kind of abstract necessity, similar to that of metre—a template for all possible utterances within the confines of the poem's performance. A reading insensitive to paratones will misplace this abstractness by aligning intonational realisation exactly with grammatical structure; and if every line is given the same intonational realisation, then the poem becomes exactly as the *Hudson Review* describes it—a 'repetitive rant'. If, however, the reader uses the syntax as a form against which to pattern a series of varied pitch movements—movements that take the sentence as their starting point, but that imply relationships between sentences which the syntax alone does not supply—then a much richer sense of contrast and harmony is achieved.

Reading Pound / shaping fragments

In reading Pound's *Cantos*, readers in search of shape or pattern are faced with a text that is typically at the opposite end of the experimental spectrum from Ginsberg, its difficulties stemming not from repetitiveness, but from its extremely diverse and fragmentary nature. *The Cantos* offer readers a particularly complex experience, jumping without warning between topics, sentence types, histories, languages and alphabets, and including large chunks of quoted text, some from rather unpromising sources; famously, Pound struggled, especially in later life, with the question of whether or not he had succeeded in making these fragments cohere.

The question of coherence, and of order, is naturally not simply a thematic question: it is also a formal one, and potentially a specifically auditory one. In a field of Modernist practice characterised by fragmentation and collage, the construction of a coherent audible form was a major challenge for more poets than Pound alone. Louis Zukofsky, whose long poem "*A*" owes a great deal to the *Cantos* in its use of collage and its didactic impulses, had grave worries about the sonic aspect of his text. He wrote to Pound about this in 1930:

> [T]his bothers me about "A" —you've got to chant <(declaim?)> the thing even in the "purely rational & commentatarian expositions"—otherwise it don't go. You gotta become seereous—ooo!—it's probably a work of "art" allright—but it don't let itself be spoken—witness the Hen[ry]. Ford quotations—the words exactly his own (pp. 29-31 MS) <& yet you got to intone them.> Now when <u>you</u> do that kind of thing—! <u>It's speech, conversation</u>![39]

For Zukofsky, the problem of his text is whether or not it will 'let itself be spoken': he praises Pound for managing much more successfully to make his complex, quotational poems sound like genuine speech.[40] Zukofsky may well be right in

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[39] Louis Zukofsky to Ezra Pound, 12 Dec 1930. *Pound / Zukofsky: Selected Letters of Ezra Pound and Louis Zukofsky*, ed. Barry Ahearn (New York: New Directions, 1987), pp. 81-2. Angle brackets represent 'afterthoughts and additions' (p. vii).

[40] The distinction between chanting and conversing is an important one in American modernist poetry. Discussion of some intonational implications of this opposition can be found in Justin Replogle, 'Vernacular Poetry: Frost to Frank O'Hara', *Twentieth-Century Literature*, 24 (1978), pp.

comparing his skills in this respect unfavourably to Pound's, since the older poet's skill in shaping his text in such a way as to influence readers' speech patterns, and specifically their intonation, is exceptional.

An example of this can be found in the first of Pound's *Pisan Cantos* (1948), the sequence that the poet composed while in a US Army detention centre in Italy in 1945. Canto 74 begins as follows:

> The enormous tragedy of the dream in the peasant's bent
> shoulders
> Manes! Manes was tanned and stuffed,
> Thus Ben and la Clara *a Milano*
> by the heels at Milano
> That maggots shd/ eat the dead bullock
> DIGONOS, Δίγονος, but the twice crucified
> where in history will you find it?
> yet say this to the Possum: a bang, not a whimper,
> with a bang not with a whimper,
> To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars.
> The suave eyes, quiet, not scornful,
> rain also is of the process.
> What you depart from is not the way
> and olive tree blown white in the wind
> washed in the Kiang and Han
> what whiteness will you add to this whiteness,
> what candor?
> "the great periplum brings in the stars to our shore."[41]

The passage is a familiar one, but can still benefit from being glossed.[42] Lines 1-11 offer a form of eulogy for Mussolini, whom Pound had long admired. Mussolini had been shot dead with his mistress Claretta Petacci in April 1945, two or three

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137-53, and Marie Borroff, 'Sound Symbolism as Drama in the Poetry of Robert Frost', *PMLA*, 107 (1992), pp. 131-44 (pp. 134-35). David Brazil's comments on ritualised speech and level tone (see above, note 21) are particularly germane.

[41] Ezra Pound, 'Canto LXXIV', ll. 1-19. *The Cantos* (London: Faber, 1986), p. 439.

[42] This paragraph is based on Carroll F. Terrell, *A Companion to* The Cantos *of Ezra Pound* (Berkeley: University of California Press in cooperation with The University of Maine at Orono, 1980, repr. 1993), p. 362, and *The Pisan Cantos*, ed. and with annotations by Richard Sieburth (New York: New Directions, 2003), pp. 119-20.

months before the composition of this Canto was begun; having been shot, the pair were then strung up by the feet in Milan, which fact may explain Pound's 'twice crucified', a description placed in ironic opposition to the Greek *Δίγονος*, twice-born, and offering an echo of the reference to Manes, a Persian prophet of the third century who was flayed and crucified for his teaching. The 'dream in the peasant's bent shoulders' is presumably the social promise that Pound found in Italian fascism; the comparison to Dioce (Deïoces), king of the Medes, and to his city of Ecbatana, places the Italian dictator in a flattering historical light. 'Maggots' is a contemptuous allusion to the Italian partisans, while 'bullock' is (among other things) a bilingual pun, the Latin 'bos' evoking the 'Boss' Mussolini. The reference to 'the Possum' is to T.S. Eliot, and to the closing lines of his 'The Hollow Men' (1925).[43] Lines 12-18 have a different frame of reference: Chinese thought and religion, with references, notably, to the death of Confucius. Finally, the 'periplum' referred to on l. 19 is, for both Terrell and Sieburth, that of the Greek sun god, Helios.

Here is an intonational scansion of these lines:

||| **H** The e'normous \trag̲e̲dy | **m** of the 'dream in the 'peasant's 'bent
　　　\sho̲ulders ||
h \Ma̲nes! | **m** 'Manes was 'tanned and \stu̲ffed, ||
m Thus 'Ben and la 'Clara *a Mil\a̲no* |
　　　　　　　l by the 'heels at Mil\a̲no ||
m That 'maggots shd/ 'eat the 'dead \bu̲llock ||
h \DIGO̲NOS, *Δίγονος,* | **m** but the 'twice Vcru̲cified |
　　　　　　　m 'where in 'history will you \fi̲nd it? ||
m yet say 'this to the \Po̲ssum: | **m** a \ba̲ng, | **m** not a \whi̲mper, ||
　　　m with a \ba̲ng | **m** 'not with a \whi̲mper, ||
h To 'build the 'city of \Di̲oce | **m** whose 'terraces are the 'colour of
\sta̲rs. |||
M The 'suave \e̲yes, | **m** \qu̲iet, | **m** not \sco̲rnful, |
　　　　　　　m 'rain 'also is of the \pro̲cess. |||
H °What you de'part from is 'not the \wa̲y ||
m and \o̲live tree | **m** °blown 'white in the \wi̲nd ||

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[43] '*This is the way the world ends / This is the way the world ends / This is the way the world ends / Not with a bang but a whimper.*'

> **m** 'washed in the 'Kiang and \<u>Han</u> | |
> **h** °what 'whiteness will you 'add to this \<u>white</u>ness, |
>   **h** °what \<u>candor</u>? | |
> **m** "the 'great \<u>peri</u>plum | 'brings in the 'stars to our \<u>shore</u>." | | |

The first point to make about this passage, as performed and scanned here, is, I think, the length and coherence of the first major paratone, which stretches from 'The enormous' as far as 'process'. It is made up of two minor paratones, the second beginning at l. 12. Despite the rather disjointed nature of the text at this point—and despite the fact that the earliest version of the poem began at l. 12—its first thirteen lines therefore manage, through the reader's deployment of intonation, to hang together as a single unit in performance.[44]

This intonational coherence is cued by several aspects of the text. The most straightforward is the use of conjunctions such as *thus*, *that* and *yet,* since these insist on the relationship between two clauses or sentences. Such conjunctions are very likely to induce mid-level key choice, whose function is to suggest the continuation of the orientation of the previous intonation-group:

> | |**m** Thus 'Ben and la 'Clara *a Mil*\<u>*ano*</u> |

> | |**m** yet say 'this to the \<u>Poss</u>um: | **m** a \<u>bang</u>, | **m** not a \<u>whim</u>per, | |

Pound creates a further inducement to intonational cohesion at this point via the unusual use of capitalization. Line 9 might well be thought to need to begin with a capital letter ('Yet say this to the Possum…'), but it does not. In consequence, the reader is likely to feel, and perform, the strength of the conjunction's link back to what precedes, rather than interpret it as signalling a new orientation.

Throughout the passage, punctuation and capitalization are manipulated in ways that seem highly likely to alter readers' probable intonational behaviour. On three occasions, Pound fails to put a full stop where the syntax would seem to demand it. The first of these is at the end of lines 1-2, which constitute a complete nominal sentence, and thus would normally require a full stop:

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[44] Richard Sieburth suggests that lines 1-11 may initially have been kept separate by Pound on account of their overtly pro-Mussolini content (*The Pisan Cantos*, p. 120).

| | | **H** The e'normous \underline{tra}gedy | **m** of the 'dream in the 'peasant's 'bent \underline{shou}lders | |

The second comes at the end of l. 6, which completes the subordinate clause begun by 'Thus Ben':

| |**m** That 'maggots shd/ 'eat the 'dead \underline{bull}ock | |

The third comes at the end of l. 10, which ends on a comma despite being followed by an infinitive phrase to which it does not offer a clear semantic or syntactic connection:

| |**m** with a \underline{bang} | **m** 'not with a \underline{whim}per, | |
| |**h** To build the city of Dioce […][45]

In all three cases, the lack of a full stop has the effect of modifying our likely intonation: the absence of this basic cue to syntactic closure will discourage readers from falling to low at the end of the sentence, and thus prevent them from marking the end of a minor paratone. The first and second of these examples have a particularly strong impact on the shape of the performed text, in that the missing full stops are immediately followed by typographical cues to a heightened excitement or energy: the exclamation mark after the word 'Manes!', which begins line 2, and the capital letters of the 'DIGONOS', which begins line 7. Readers are likely to understand these cues as signalling important new developments or shifts of tone in the text, and to respond to them by adopting high key:

| |**h** \underline{Ma}nes! |

| |**h** \underline{DI}GONOS, *Δίγονος,* |

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[45] 'To build the city of Dioce whose terraces are the colour of stars' may be understood, despite the comma that precedes it, as discursively autonomous, with an implicit premise along the lines of 'Our ambition was / is / should be…'.

If the previous sentences had ended with the reader falling to low in his or her pitch range, and thus ending a paratone, the high key on 'Manes!' and on 'DIGONOS' would have in each case signalled the start of a new major paratone, constituting a break in the structure of the poem. By suppressing the full stops and discouraging the low falls, Pound helps his readers to continue the flow of the poem; at the same time, high key on words such as 'Manes!' and 'DIGONOS' provides the kind of auditory variety which prevents the continuity from becoming monotonous.

The poem's first full stop occurs in l. 12: here, at last, the reader will probably fall to low and end the minor paratone. The next sentence appears to move on to a new topic, which would normally induce the reader to signal the arrival of a new topic or new orientation via a choice of high key. Yet the sentence begins in a syntactically opaque manner, with a noun phrase and two adjectival phrases that are never connected to a verb:

> | | | **M** The 'suave \eyes, | **m** \quiet, | **m** not \scornful, |
> **m** 'rain 'also is of the \process. | | |

Given this lack of clarity, readers are less likely to opt for high key. If they continue at mid-level, the sentence will correspond to a new minor paratone, rather than a new major paratone. The flow of the poem is thus prolonged a little further—and the separate textual fragments that were lines 1-11 and 12ff are smoothly fused together.[46] The fall to low at the full stop which closes this sentence, combined with the decisive change of topic in the line that follows, finally complete the major paratone that began back in l. 1.

Via intonation, the text can thus create a surprising sense of continuity. Yet it also creates a great sense of pattern and poise within that continuity, and it is this patterning that makes the passage so complex and powerful to read and hear. This patterning occurs principally at the level of the sequences of intonation-groups that are separated and grouped by pause—in the scansion, the sequences that fall between the double bars. Pause is difficult to predict with any certainty; the suggestions that follow assume that a marked pause is most likely to occur when a

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[46] See above, and note 44.

line-break and a syntactic break coincide, and when these breaks are not followed by an indented (and thus potentially subordinate) line. The first of these sequences stretches over lines 1-2, and falls into two uneven halves consisting of one intonation-group each:

> ||| **H** The e'normous \underline{trage}dy | **m** of the 'dream in the 'peasant's 'bent \underline{shou}lders ||

The second sequence, in l. 3, has a similar bipartite structure:

> || **h** \\\underline{Ma}nes! | **m** 'Manes was 'tanned and \underline{stuffed}, ||

The third, which stretches over ll. 4-5, has likewise two parts:

> || **m** Thus 'Ben and la 'Clara *a Mil\\\underline{ano}* |
> **l** by the 'heels at Mil\underline{a}no ||

The fourth is snarlingly single:

> || **m** That 'maggots shd/ 'eat the 'dead \underline{bull}ock ||

The fifth, which runs over lines 7-8, is tripartite:

> || **h** \\\underline{DIGONOS}, *Δίγονος,* | **m** but the 'twice V\underline{cru}cified |
> **m** 'where in 'history will you \underline{find} it? ||

So far, then, the poem has proposed a form, repeated it, shrunk it, and expanded it: 2, 2, 2, 1, 3. The next group, in l. 9, probably contains three intonation-groups once more:

> || **m** yet say 'this to the \\\underline{Poss}um: | **m** a \underline{bang}, | **m** not a \underline{whim}per, ||

Line 10 retracts to two:

> || **m** with a \underline{bang} | **m** 'not with a \underline{whim}per, ||

Line 11 offers the final pause-delimited sequence of the poem's first minor paratone: as well as containing two probable intonation-groups, it echoes, in its length, its rhythms and its sonorities, the poem's first line, and brings a certain sense of closure:

|| **h** To 'build the 'city of \<u>Di</u>oce | **m** whose 'terraces are the 'colour of \<u>stars</u>. |||

In its first minor paratone, the poem as performed here has thus grouped its intonation-groups by pause as follows: 2, 2, 2, 1, 3, 3, 2, 2. There appears to be a sense of perceptible design in this series, which approaches, if it does not exactly realise, a symmetrical envelope pattern based on a 2-2-3-3-2-2 progression. Such a pattern, as well as offering a strong sense of shape, suggests two different kinds of balance as it proceeds, with the bipartite groups appearing more simple, the tripartite, more complex, and the lone single-unit group uniquely emphatic:

|| **m** That 'maggots shd/ 'eat the 'dead \<u>bull</u>ock ||

Different readers may, of course, vary in their rendition of certain groups, but even a performance that differs significantly from the one scanned here appears highly likely to be perceptible as being based on variations around a bipartite norm. The overall effect is, I think, that of a remarkable pattern of sound, both coherent and delicately varied; overlaid onto it, moreover, are rhythmic effects that cannot be considered here, and which add even more subtlety and strength.

The final pause-delimited sequence of this major paratone—a sequence that is itself a minor paratone in its own right—is likely to fall into four intonation-groups, a development away from the bipartite norm, and one that appears appropriate to the sequence's transitional status:

||| **M** The 'suave \<u>eyes</u>, | **m** \<u>quiet</u>, | **m** not \<u>scorn</u>ful, |
                        m 'rain 'also is of the \<u>pro</u>cess. |||[47]

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[47] A three-group sequence will be created if the words 'quiet, not scornful' are taken together.

As for the second major paratone, the intonational realization predicted by this scansion also appears highly patterned. The paratone begins with the high onset at the start of l. 14; it is much shorter than its predecessor, and the repeated questions that it contains entail a notably higher proportion of high-key intonation-groups, adding energy and dynamism to its intonational shape. It also has an envelope pattern, but one that is based on the distribution, not of intonation-groups, but of key: h, m, m, m, h, h:

> | | | **H** °What you de'part from is 'not the \\<u>way</u> | |
> **m** and \\<u>olive</u> tree | **m** °blown 'white in the \\<u>wind</u> | |
> **m** 'washed in the 'Kiang and \\<u>Han</u> | |
> **h** °what 'whiteness will you 'add to this \\<u>white</u>ness, |
>   **h** °what \\<u>can</u>dor? | |

In its final line of this major paratone, mid-key appears likely once again:

> | | **m** "the 'great \\<u>peri</u>plum | 'brings in the 'stars to our \\<u>shore</u>." | | |

As in the first major paratone, therefore, the final line, which marks a thematic transition, offers a deviation from the ongoing intonational pattern.

It need not be argued that Pound worked out in detail the patterns suggested in this discussion. It seems, however, entirely possible that his ear for poetic form, which at its best was extraordinarily sensitive, should have guided his composition towards such powerful combinations of continuity and change. Throughout this brief extract, the poet can be seen to pattern his apparently fragmentary material extremely carefully. What results is, in aesthetic terms, a complex set of perceptual pleasures for the reader, grounded in significant measure in intonation, and achieving considerable richness and subtlety. Rhetorically, of course, the cohesion of the intonational patterning that the text encourages may be considered an attempt at displaying the continuing sanity and power of the poet's worldview, and its capacity to bring the disparate aspects of experience into a meaningful whole. Readers may resist this implicit rhetoric; but the poet's aesthetic achievement appears undeniable.

Conclusion

The aim of the analyses proposed in this study is to encourage more complete and more accurate reflection on the formal operations of the experimental poetry that readers, and prosodists, still have such difficulty in describing and understanding. By virtue of the kind of focus on intonation that the poets themselves encouraged, using linguistic tools that in a certain measure were unavailable to them, new methods of analysis are made possible concerning their creation of poetic form. Allen Ginsberg can be revealed to be less of a prisoner of his syntax, and more of an artist in sound, than is sometimes alleged, while Ezra Pound's extraordinarily multifarious formal sense is sketched out in ways more complete than would otherwise be possible. More generally, by extending the examination of intonation to encompass markers of discourse structure such as key and paratone, new tools are made available for examining the ways in which performed poems may give rise to the perception of such crucial components of form as pattern, complexity and coherence.

Intonation will always remain a mobile phenomenon, albeit one with strong roots in the text, and the scansions proposed in this essay seek neither to reveal a fixed order in a given poem, nor to impose the author's own. Their most basic goal is to encourage dialogue and exchange on how these and other texts can, might or should be performed—that is, be read aloud, by readers other than the poet himself or herself. The experiments in poetic sound conducted by many Modernist poets and their successors are of a relatively fragile variety—certainly, more fragile than are metre and visual form. The complex aesthetic experiences to which, at their best, they give rise, call for, and repay, detailed, informed, and wide-ranging attention.