MAJOR ADJECTIVES IN ENGLISH POETRY

From Wyatt to Auden

BY

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J. M.
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I. INTRODUCTION: GLASS TO PATTERN

The attempt to look at poetry, instead of through it, involves many problems of selective emphasis. Though for the biographer or the critic the poem makes a useful window-glass or mirror in which part may serve as effectively as whole to illuminate or reflect, for the historian of poetry parts are meaningful largely as they lead toward whole poems and poetics. The difficulty is in distinguishing not the biographical, or the moral, but the poetic emphases. In Wordsworth and the Vocabulary of Emotion and Pathetic Fallacy in the Nineteenth Century I have suggested, and suggest more strongly here, that quantitative emphases are of some importance in the description of poetry. While the earlier studies began with contents of vocabulary and device which seemed significant, and then proceeded to establish some quantitative relationships in context, this study of adjectives begins more formally with a part of speech conventionally isolated, and attempts then to follow some of the main outlines of the pattern of its quantity and quality, stability and variety, in English poetry.

More commonly, those who have wished to make so impersonal an approach to poetic history have made it by way of metrics, finding in the development of the heroic couplet or blank verse some measure of fact which can be literally described before its relationships are interpreted. All patterns of repetition in sound, in meter, assonance, refrain, provide indeed some basis in the poetic material. And equally the patterns of word reference and sentence making provide such basis, as sense and syntax share with sound in the character of language. But sense and syntax have been regarded as less describable than metrical measures, or have been treated in equal separation from their texts. Sense and content seem easily to lead the historian out of the poem into the world of affairs, and a study of the vocabulary of Jones the poet becomes either a study of the interests of “Jones the man” or a consideration of “essential” values. So even the analytical critics of this decade turn discussions of what poetic language is to prescriptions for what it ought to be, and not only theorists like Richards but also historians like Bateson do more evaluating than tabulating.
Certainly much of tabulation as an end in itself is to be deplored. Lists of adjectives or question marks or metrical schemes are as far from the poems which share them as are many of the standards of value which accept or deny the "poetry" in the poems. Quantity and quality wilt when long separated. But a danger often present, on the other hand, is the establishing of quality not upon the determination, or even upon the disregard, but upon the assumption, of quantity. As C. C. Fries says, in introducing his *American English Grammar*, "general impression" is the critical danger. I should like to borrow his introduction for my own, in smaller and different terms:

In method, too, this sketch attempts to give some proportion to the description of the grammar of Present-day English by the use of quantitative information. Many of the generalizations appearing in English grammars actually express or imply quantitative judgments—judgments of absolute or relative frequency. Most of these depend upon general impressions rather than upon an attempt carefully to calculate the frequency of actual instances in any body of material. Here every example of each grammatical item discussed was recorded so that its relative frequency in the body of material here examined could be indicated.\(^1\)

The substitution of *poetry* for *grammar* will suggest my own purpose, in the large "to give some proportion to the description" of poetry, and in the small to make haste slowly in this direction by an indication of the relative frequency of adjectives, especially certain very frequent adjectives, in the work of some representative poets.

It is clear that there is little precedent in method upon which to rely. Nevertheless I have to acknowledge a debt to many sorts of studies in many sorts of ways. My Bibliography lists, first, many works on individual poets, like Ainsworth's on Collins, Caldwell's on Keats, Matthiessen's on Eliot, Horton's on Crane, or specially pertinent analyses like Rannie's *Keats' Epithets*, which as a group are helpfully technical as well as wisely biographical. Second, the Bibliography lists some books on poetry, standard for our time, like Lowes' *Convention and Revolt in Poetry*, Brooks' *Modern Poetry and the Tradition*, and Bateson's *English Poetry and the English Language*, which dis-

cuss some of the problems, though they do not use the methods, of my inquiries. And third, the Bibliography lists a miscellany of anthropological, psychological, and aesthetical works, like Benedict's *Patterns of Culture* and Downey's *Creative Imagination* and Panofsky's *Iconology*, the very mixed combination of which suggests the need for an instruction which accepted literary scholarship does not supply, an instruction in the establishing of descriptive norms, for literature as for society. The word *pattern* itself, so representative of modern interest that it is already overworked, indicates a need for techniques of discrimination different from those which arrive at a "mirror for magistrates" or a "room with a view," not by Elizabethan rhetorics or Augustan surveys or Victorian impressions, but rather by a description of the functioning of parts in frequency and relation, which shall arrive at the whole dense and lively nature of the composition. Authoritative precedent in this direction is by no means helpfully unified, but it is hopefully various.

In order to describe the medium of English poetry in its general English extensiveness, one considers the individual poet less as individual and more as poet, and emphasizes the materials which he shares rather than those he invents. But ultimately, individuality should not be the loser, as its position in wider contexts should be refined, the discovered major agreements at the centers of arts clarifying the individual specializations at their peripheries. It will often be said that quantity, frequency, large agreement work on too crude a level to lead into the significances of art. The argument runs, that what a poet most cares about, what is closest to his heart and meaning, is not what he refers to most, and most loosely, but what he refers to least, and

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2 The relation of language to its society is commented upon widely in such terms as these: "We can imagine a psychology of peoples based upon the examination of divergent semantic changes attested in the languages they speak. This study would call for considerable subtlety of mind, but it would be worthwhile attempting." Joseph Vendryes, *Language: A Linguistic Introduction to History*, tr. Paul Radin (rev. ed., 1925), p. xiii. "The great task of the language historian, which as yet hardly been attempted, is to recognize in its language customs the deposits of the mental life of the whole of humanity." Karl Vossler, *The Spirit of Language in Civilization*, p. 106. "In the sense that the vocabulary of a language more or less faithfully reflects the culture whose purpose it serves, it is perfectly true that the history of language and the history of culture move along parallel lines." Edward Sapir, *Language*, pp. 234-235. "... the basis of feeling suffers extraordinary shifts at given historical points, and that it is these shifts which mark off the 'periods' in literature." Frederick A. Pottle, *The Idiom of Poetry*, p. 20.
most subtly. The touchstones in art are thus said to be the rarities, the single lines, phrases, even words, which strike fire for the whole: the rare streaks of luck and pure skill when everything the fallible poet has been working for crystallizes in seeming infallibility. I would not deny such touchstones, but I would emphasize their fragility, their variability from reader to reader; and I would suggest that because they have been of central interest for so many years of literary history, they may well now be provisionally subordinated to, and illuminated by, the larger body of quantitatively poetic material. For “poetry” means all that is in it as well as the best that is in it, and there is therefore significance in the question, What is in it most?

There is, after all, no just theoretical reason why the frequent in art should be the amorphous and insignificant. Art selects more rigorously than most other human activities, eliminating those droves of blights and errors which daily life allows, or, if blight and error are the subject, controlling them to a purpose. This is not to say that an artist does not make mistakes, but only that he has had a good chance to choose; as a work embodies his mistakes, it embodies also his choices and his values, in strength and frequency, the singular and the shared.

The English adjective, one finds even by tabulation, embodies many of the strong recurrent choices of English poets, yet speaks singularly for any one of them. It appears once in every average pentameter line, through all moods and subject matters; yet for Donne it decreases sharply, and for Milton it increases. Its major references are shared by most poets, its good, sweet, fair; yet dark is characteristically major for Shelley alone, and dim for Poe. The English adjective is conservative, in its most frequent poetic forms, maintaining certain positions and emphases through changing contexts from Wyatt to Auden; yet it has been moving, too, in a steady direction through the centuries, away from conceptual limiting forms toward active participial, and away from terms of evaluative standard toward terms of sensed quality. The types, the stabilities, the directions, of the adjective are part of the nature and change of poetry itself, more easily and provisionally discriminable in part than in whole.

The course of observation I have taken has three main parts. The
first, through the use of the twenty-five concordances for poets other than dramatists or translators, establishes the ten descriptive adjectives most used by each poet. The second counts the adjectives, participial, limiting, descriptive, but not demonstrative or pronominal, in an early and characteristic thousand lines of the work of some of these poets who seem especially representative of extremes of style. The third examines the structural and contextual relationship of the adjectives in specific poems within the thousand lines. The whole undertakes to make plain, in the prose of the text and the figures of the tables, some major frequencies and functions of adjectives in English poetry.

Many terms and problems in this process require clarification, and for those readers who are not willing to accept the terms at face value, or for those who wish to use the process or to check it, I make a series of closer specifications which others may ignore.

"Adjective."—This term, defined by Webster’s Dictionary as indicating a quality of the thing named, and by Frederick Bodmer in The Loom of Language as signifying a quality of a group of substantives, includes, as I use it, the normal categories of number and limitation (some, many, all, several, one, twelfth, etc.), the participial modifier (embroidered, moved, shining, etc.) when used adjectivally and not as part of the verb, and the descriptive in its general sense (good, common, obscure, green, etc.); I exclude demonstrative and pronominal adjectives (that, those, mine). The adjective, defined in the eighteenth century as a part of speech, had been earlier classed with nouns. The Elizabethan rhetoricians recognized as a figure, however, Epitheton, or the Qualifier, giving “a quality by way of addition,” as the list in Rubel’s Poetic Diction in the English Renaissance indicates. Because of its relatively clear boundaries, the adjective, like verb or noun, special reference or figure, device of sound or statement, seems better for counting than, for example, the “image,” which is now, especially in the wake of Caroline Spurgeon’s Shakespeare’s Imagery and What It Tells Us, being variously defined yet often treated as countable. In

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8 Note for example the differing treatments of imagery in Henry W. Wells’ Poetic Imagery Illustrated from Elizabethan Literature and John Livingston Lowes’ The Road to Xanadu.

Many careful studies of items less complex than images—of colors, compounds, caesuras—often seem trivial because they make few connections. But some recent work, like Rubel’s on Eliza-
contrast, the adjective’s function and position of modification are relatively stable.‘

Concordances.—The more than two dozen concordances which have been made for English poets provide an opportunity to learn, though they do not provide the information, just what words in what contexts are used just how many times. My method of counting to discover the words used most often has been to establish for each concordance the number of words per column, columns per page, pages per volume, then to establish a certain proportionate minimum of occurrence, say two columns, and to count all above that roughly by columns, having established certain word combinations to be counted as one (singulars and plurals, like man—men; comparatives, like good, better, best; adjective-noun alliances, in which I subordinate the numerically subordinate form, like proud, pride, and strong, strength, and true, truth, and young, youth; and finally, verb variations like came, come, and dead, death, die, dying, and fall, fell, and find, found, and fill, full, and gave, give, gift, and go, going, gone, went, and knew, know, and lie, lay, and life, live, and said, say, and saw, see, sight, and tell, told, and think, thought. Such a method of count results in the approximate number of times any major word with its variations of form is used by the poet. It steers a course between the masses of participles and relational words, which concordances do not list fully or consistently, on the one hand, and the many small words used only a few times, on the other. G. Udny Yule, in his Statistical Study of Literary Vocabulary, has shown how words “tail off” into one or two uses apiece, and how the few words most used tend to comprise a large portion of the total uses.‘ It is this portion, the central mass of reference in a poet’s work, with which we are concerned.

*bethan poetic diction, Empson’s on ambiguities, David Rynin’s at the University of California on kinds of statement in poetry, moves toward more variety yet more coherence of description.

‘Though an interesting article by David P. Boder, “The Adjective-Verb Quotient: A Contribution to the Psychology of Language,” so limits the term by position and other special factors as to raise many issues of definition.

‘G. Udny Yule, The Statistical Study of Literary Vocabulary, pp. 3, 11, 12. This highly meticulous and methodical work analyzes not major emphases but the characteristic spread of vocabulary in prose work, with much statistical elaboration. It supports my more simply arrived at conclusion that “the use of the vocabulary is concentrated very heavily on a relatively small proportion of the whole” (p. 12), and that the characteristics of the text are to be seen in the adjectives, nouns, verbs of this proportion (pp. 21, 50, 222–225).
The number ten in the lists of “ten major words” and “ten major adjectives” is not wholly arbitrary: it is based on a frequently wide break in quantity between tenth or eleventh, eleventh or twelfth, word; also, with respect to adjectives, on their proportional relation to other major words, normally one to ten. Some lists shorten or lengthen to suit the break in quantity; Pope’s, for example, is short on major adjectives proportionally.

The lists of major adjectives do not include the participial and limiting forms analyzed in the texts, but, for simplicity’s sake, merely the descriptive forms which on the whole are individually most frequent. The great exception is dead, which I do therefore include. As much simplification of forms as possible is necessary because of what I suppose to be the necessary inconsistencies of concordance editors, in making partial or complete exclusions of words. Clearly, they cannot afford to list all contexts of common particles, nor do they see fit to summarize by count; but often what was an intelligent principle of exclusion for one poet turns out to be unwise for the next, and the consequent discrepancies make comparisons forever afterward impossible. The words still, long, and full, for example, now major descriptive adjectives for some poets, were so frequently colorless adverbs that they were omitted from complete lists, and the history of their alteration is obscured. But whatever the troubling vagaries of concordances, one is grateful to their embattled makers, especially to Lane Cooper for establishing in his Wordsworth some sorts of norms.

A characteristic thousand lines.—In selecting poetic texts for analysis, it is easy to seem too cavalier. The texts are neither clear random samples for statistical analysis, on the one hand, nor demonstrably representative, on the other. Nevertheless, in actual practice a middle ground is natural and workable. A thousand lines seems to me a useful unit because the complete poems of many poets, Gray and Collins, for example, amount to just about that, and because in all the extensions from a thousand lines which I have made for sample, the proportions seem to remain the same, in Wordsworth, in Tennyson, in Browning, in Quarles, in Pope, and others. For the sake of some uniformity, I select lines of early maturity, usually accepted as characteristic: not juvenilia,
or late work, or special experiments. Often the choice is based partly on my own interest, and it should always be remembered that, although generalizations may be made from the selection, they are always pro-
visional. Anything said about Pope is said specifically about the Essay on Man; anything about Donne, about the first Songs and Sonets. The poet’s name usually is shorthand, though provisionally and hypothetically often more, for the particular work considered.

The poetic line is the unit of measure. Thus one may speak of 900 adjectives in 1,000 lines of poetry, or 9 in 10. In strictest arithmetical sense, the line is too flexible a measure, but in literary sense I think it the most significant. “Number of adjectives per total words” tells little of poetic structure; “Number of adjectives per lines” tells much. Furthermore, the constant English line has a pentameter measure, and shorter averages may be adjusted proportionally. Indeed, the effect of linear and stanzic variety, as of subject variety, on proportions of adjective usage will, I think, surprise most readers by its absence or unimportance. The poet’s characteristic sentence structure seems to hold very strongly throughout its varying sound and subject patterns.

As for the representative force of poets chosen, that too is provi-
sional; but it has some support of common agreement. The available concordances first limit the number for whom full information is obtainable. The tabulation of the major words of all these indicates the singularity of Collins in adjective innovation, and suggests his bond with Spenser, Milton, Keats. Donne would seem to be the poet of most different kind, and his close bond with Wyatt, his lesser likeness to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century figures may be discovered experimentally. Thus the process of choice. All such selection is experimental, as it both rests on and tests common assumptions. The resulting picture of developments and stabilities, agreements and idio-
syncrasies, in poetry is thorough in its own limited range, accurate in its own limited terms, and as representative as the reader’s and writer’s own further experiments and speculations will allow.

The combined observations of concordance quantities, of thousand-
line proportions, and of single-poem proportions, in many sorts of

* Yule, op. cit., p. 109.
poets, should at least draw us somewhat nearer to that illusive norm of English poetry which Allen Tate believes to be so hard to define.\(^7\) Major poetic emphases are impressive in their likenesses, a poet’s stresses in part predictable. Poetry, with all its innovations and continuities, has a whole and growing discernible pattern. It not only represents the past fact and the present value which most scholars and critics treat in it; it is also a past value, a sum of past values, and a present describable fact.

The tables which introduce some of the complexities of this fact I place here in an introductory position as the most convenient condensation of the material of the text. Tables 1 and 2 contain the lists of main adjectives and words of other kinds for those poets for whom we have concordances. Table 3 shows the quantities of adjective usage in the various 1,000 lines. Table 3 analyzes in greater detail the proportions of adjective categories. Though the reading of figures seems often heavy and meaningless, it may provide a useful preliminary survey before one turns to tracing the complex character of adjectives in Sir Thomas Wyatt’s Rondeaus, in the *Essay on Man*, or in *The Bridge*.

Table 1.—An outstanding fact of these major adjective lists is their relative uniformity. It is evident that certain clear traits are persistently most “poetic.” In the first line, from Chaucer to Shakespeare, most of Chaucer’s main words are shared by the others, and Shakespeare finds no innovation necessary. The two top words, *good* and *great*, are repeatedly so placed. The terms as a whole are terms of value and affection. *Fair*, *dear*, *sweet* show attitudes of pleasure; *poor*, *gentle*, *proud*, *sad*, *wise*, of responsibility and sympathy; *good*, *great*, *just*, *true*, of standards.

Yet within the large uniformity is individuality. Note for example how the character of Wyatt’s list differs from Spenser’s, the *true*, *just*, *sure*, and *cruel* more strict and negatively implicative than Spenser’s *gentle*, *high*, *sad*, and *sweet*. And note Marlowe’s most expectable *proud*. In the next lines, Donne’s characteristic negatives appear in his stress on *bad*, and Herrick’s senses in his *white*, and Burns himself in his fine *bonnie* and *honest*.

\(^7\) Allen Tate, *Reactionary Essays on Poetry and Ideas*, p. 226.
At the same time, continuities continue. After Collins there is less innovation. The Victorians add little new, though they make their own combinations. The Americans are the most inventive of new stresses, and they participate in a tendency which can be noted strongly in Collins: the tendency away from Elizabethan terms of standard toward the terms of quality: toward Keats' emphasis, for example, on bright, soft, golden, high, and green.

Within continuities, then, there are developments; within uniformity, both idiosyncratic and innovative change. The sum of forty major epithets in twenty-five poets indicates a uniformity of 85 per cent. Yet, even at this high level of agreement, variety is strong; Poe, as one would expect, shares little with Chaucer. The ties of time and type have both a strength.

**TABLE 1**

**Major Adjectives of Twenty-five Poets**

(Tabulation is based on concordance data. Figures are approximate. The first appearance of an adjective in the lists is italicized.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chaucer</th>
<th>Wyatt</th>
<th>Spenser</th>
<th>Marlowe</th>
<th>Shakespeare</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>good 1800</td>
<td>good 90</td>
<td>fair 1200</td>
<td>good 840</td>
<td>good 3000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great 1100</td>
<td>great 75</td>
<td>good 1100</td>
<td>great 500</td>
<td>great 1200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wise 550</td>
<td>true 50</td>
<td>great 1100</td>
<td>sweet 440</td>
<td>fair 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair 450</td>
<td>just 35</td>
<td>dear 380</td>
<td>fair 400</td>
<td>sweet 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>high 400</td>
<td>sure 35</td>
<td>dead 360</td>
<td>poor 240</td>
<td>true 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>old 330</td>
<td>cruel 30</td>
<td>gentle 300</td>
<td>dead 200</td>
<td>poor 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dead 300</td>
<td>dead 30</td>
<td>high 300</td>
<td>proud 200</td>
<td>dead 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dear 300</td>
<td>dear 30</td>
<td>sad 300</td>
<td>true 200</td>
<td>old 500</td>
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<tr>
<td>little 300</td>
<td>fair 30</td>
<td>sweet 300</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Donne</td>
<td>Herbert</td>
<td>Herrick</td>
<td>Milton</td>
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<td>poor 55</td>
<td>little 90</td>
<td>high 200</td>
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<tr>
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<td>dear 40</td>
<td>dead 70</td>
<td>fair 160</td>
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<tr>
<td>fair 70</td>
<td>full 35</td>
<td>dear 70</td>
<td>bad 100</td>
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<td>old 30</td>
<td>fair 70</td>
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<td>poor 70</td>
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*white 70*
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<td>bright 35</td>
<td>good 110</td>
<td>good 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>old 1100</td>
<td>sweet 35</td>
<td>old 85</td>
<td>old 100</td>
<td>dead 35</td>
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<tr>
<td>last 1000</td>
<td>deep 30</td>
<td>sweet 70</td>
<td><em>sweet</em> 100</td>
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<tr>
<td>new 700</td>
<td><em>dim</em> 30</td>
<td>high 50</td>
<td><em>large</em> 70</td>
<td>old 30</td>
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<tr>
<td>true 650</td>
<td>fair 30</td>
<td><em>new</em> 50</td>
<td>dear 55</td>
<td>still 25</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(partial in most)</td>
</tr>
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<p>| | | | | |</p>
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<tr>
<th></th>
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<td>good 30</td>
<td>wise 50</td>
<td>great 55</td>
<td>bad 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>great 600</td>
<td>happy 30</td>
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<td>little 55</td>
<td>little 20</td>
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<td></td>
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<td><em>great</em> 40</td>
<td><em>red</em> 55</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>young</em> 30</td>
<td><em>full</em> (partial)</td>
<td><em>white</em> 55</td>
<td><em>young</em> 20</td>
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</table>
Table 2.—The major adjective, in a list of major words of all kinds, amounts to only one in ten. Good is the epithet frequent enough to appear in all the word lists of the Elizabethans, with true also for Wyatt, and great and fair for Spenser, the man of adjectives. The increase in adjectives through these lists to Collins is noteworthy, and is paralleled by a decrease in verb innovation. By the nineteenth century it is the noun which is new: in the Romantics’ time and light, in Poe’s dream and night, in Emerson’s day and nature. The change in major content is again, as in the adjective, from standards of relationship to outward qualities and temporal surroundings, from verb actions to noun atmospheres. And, as in the adjective lists, the persistence of individual stresses, of Marlowe’s lord and king, of Pope’s friend, of Housman’s lad and lie, shows through a uniformity, slightly less than the adjetival, of 80 per cent.

This table, in less complete form, is analyzed more fully in “Some Major Poetic Words,” Essays and Studies, Univ. Calif. Publ. English, Vol. XIV (1943).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Major Words of Twenty-five Poets</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Tabulation is based on concordance data. Figures are approximate. The first appearance of a word in the lists is italicized.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<tr>
<th>Poet</th>
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<td>thing</td>
<td>1800</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>see</td>
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</tr>
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<td>go</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>heaven</td>
<td>1000</td>
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<td>250</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>love</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
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<td>Marlowe</td>
<td>lord</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>king</td>
<td>1440</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
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<td>make</td>
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<td>come</td>
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<td>come</td>
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<td>know</td>
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<td>2900</td>
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<td></td>
<td>know</td>
<td>2480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>death</td>
<td>2470</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>know</td>
<td>2480</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>death</td>
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TABLE 2—Continued

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<th>HERRICK</th>
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<th>POPE</th>
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<td>love 500</td>
<td>heaven 600</td>
<td>man 330</td>
</tr>
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<td>man 150</td>
<td>see 350</td>
<td>man 430</td>
<td>love 230</td>
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<td>death 320</td>
<td>heart 130</td>
<td>come 330</td>
<td>see 430</td>
<td>life 220</td>
</tr>
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<td>soul 300</td>
<td>love 130</td>
<td>die 250</td>
<td>good 320</td>
<td>make 220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good 260</td>
<td>death 120</td>
<td>give 250</td>
<td>know 310</td>
<td>God 210</td>
</tr>
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<td>see 240</td>
<td>give 120</td>
<td>know 250</td>
<td>high 300</td>
<td>good 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>earth 280</td>
<td>die 200</td>
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<td>man 250</td>
<td>live 270</td>
<td>give 190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>go 200</td>
<td>sin 110</td>
<td>sweet 250</td>
<td>death 240</td>
<td>friend 180</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life 100</td>
<td>thing 100</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>COLLINS</th>
<th>GRAY</th>
<th>GOLDSMITH</th>
<th>BURNS</th>
<th>COWPER</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
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<td>see 70</td>
<td>man 90</td>
<td>love 380</td>
<td>man 460</td>
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<tr>
<td>maid 45</td>
<td>eye 60</td>
<td>good 70</td>
<td>heart 300</td>
<td>see 310</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sweet 45</td>
<td>love 50</td>
<td>see 60</td>
<td>see 270</td>
<td>make 300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair 40</td>
<td>die 40</td>
<td>come 50</td>
<td>good 250</td>
<td>life 280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see 40</td>
<td>give 30</td>
<td>give 50</td>
<td>man 250</td>
<td>truth 240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>youth 40</td>
<td>hand 30</td>
<td>life 50</td>
<td>dear 220</td>
<td>love 230</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye 35</td>
<td>know 30</td>
<td>long (2) 50</td>
<td>life 220</td>
<td>heart 220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hand 35</td>
<td>live 30</td>
<td>love 50</td>
<td>give 210</td>
<td>give 210</td>
</tr>
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<td>song 35</td>
<td>long (2) 30</td>
<td>please 50</td>
<td>come 200</td>
<td>good 210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wild 35</td>
<td>youth 30</td>
<td></td>
<td>day 200</td>
<td>God 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>make 200</td>
<td>please 200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>sweet 200</td>
<td></td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>COLERIDGE</th>
<th>WORDSWORTH</th>
<th>KEATS</th>
<th>SHELLEY</th>
<th>TENNYSON</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>see 1400</td>
<td>see 480</td>
<td>death 1100</td>
<td>love 1100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>see 800</td>
<td>love 1300</td>
<td>love 400</td>
<td>life 900</td>
<td>man 1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>life 750</td>
<td>man 1270</td>
<td>eye 360</td>
<td>light 800</td>
<td>come 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>heart 750</td>
<td>life 1250</td>
<td>death 320</td>
<td>see 720</td>
<td>life 900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>man 750</td>
<td>thought 1100</td>
<td>sweet 320</td>
<td>come 650</td>
<td>die 800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>eye 650</td>
<td>heart 1050</td>
<td>come 290</td>
<td>earth 650</td>
<td>know 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>make 650</td>
<td>day 1020</td>
<td>fair 250</td>
<td>heart 650</td>
<td>see 700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>death 550</td>
<td>come 800</td>
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<td>heart 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>know 550</td>
<td>good 750</td>
<td>thought 250</td>
<td>man 650</td>
<td>make 600</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thought 550</td>
<td>time 750</td>
<td>go (went) 230</td>
<td>know 600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>long (2) 730</td>
<td>life 200</td>
<td>thought 600</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>eye 710</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
Table 3.—The first observable difference in adjective quantity here, the difference between the seven adjectives to ten lines of Wyatt’s text and the twelve adjectives to ten lines of Spenser’s, represents the extremes which continue through the century, between Donne and Milton, between Pope and Collins, between Keats and Housman, between Eliot and Crane. The figures in brackets make adjustment for those works which employ less than an average pentameter line.

The list of the first fifteen works emphasizes development from one extreme in Wyatt to another in Keats. The second list of fifteen stress a section of premodern and modern, showing a settling into a middle range of usage, less from seven to twelve, more from eight to nine. From the consistently high emphasis on adjectives by Pope, Thomson, Collins, and Gray, one may surmise that the eighteenth century as well as the nineteenth provided a center for adjectival poetry.

The texts, selected mainly for standardness, inexpensiveness, and convenience, are listed for the sake of accuracy in checking.

Table 4.—This categorizing of adjective uses represents the closer examination of the thousand lines of text in twenty poets, for almost half of whom concordance material is not available. Most noteworthy is the fact that the proportioning of categories parallels quantity: that poets using few adjectives use a high proportion of numerical, limiting
### TABLE 3

**Adjective Quantity in 1,000-line Texts of Thirty Poets**  
(Numbers in brackets represent adjustment to standard of five-accent line.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poet</th>
<th>Adjs</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spenser, d. 1599</td>
<td>1150/1000 = 12</td>
<td>Faerie Queene, I, I. Amoretti thr. XXXVI. Cambridge ed.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shakespeare, d. 1616</td>
<td>1000/1000 = 10</td>
<td>Sonnets thr. LXXII. Oxford ed.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Waller, d. 1687</td>
<td>1220/1130 = 11</td>
<td>First 22 Miscellaneous Poems.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Date of Death</td>
<td>Lines</td>
<td>Adjs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. G. Rossetti, d. 1882</td>
<td></td>
<td>890/950 = 9</td>
<td>Sonnets and Songs ’70. Everyman ed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wallace Stevens</td>
<td></td>
<td>910/1010 = 9</td>
<td>Notes toward a Supreme Fiction (Cummington Press, 1942), and first 14 poems of Parts of a World (New York, Knopf, 1942).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dylan Thomas</td>
<td></td>
<td>970/1100 = 9</td>
<td>The World I Breathe (thr. no. 29) (Norfolk, Conn., New Directions, 1939).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ones, as do Wyatt and Donne, for example; and that poets of many adjectives stress descriptive participials, as do Milton, Collins, Keats. Two main types of poetic combination are clear throughout the list.

The force of time in development is also clear. The extremes of usage narrow down in the moderns (though this moderation may represent merely the narrower time range in the second half of the list). Not only does participial emphasis rise and persist, at the expense of limiting and descriptive forms, but also it is in the moderns characteristically active, as the letter g representing a majority of -ing forms shows. In numerical proportions, as in major contents, poetic adjective uses indicate a measure of poetic individuality within uniformity, and the continuities of time and type.

TABLE 4
Adjective Categories in Thousand-Line Texts of Twenty Poets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical</th>
<th>Adjs.</th>
<th>Lines</th>
<th>Limiting per cent</th>
<th>Participial per cent</th>
<th>Descriptive per cent</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wyatt</td>
<td>720/1000</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spenser</td>
<td>1150/1000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Donne</td>
<td>660/1010</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton</td>
<td>1190/1000</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>Pope</td>
<td>1300/1300</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>Collins</td>
<td>1250/1050</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
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<td>1200/1200</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>65</td>
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<td>Keats</td>
<td>1470/1220</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>60</td>
<td></td>
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II. FOUR POETS OF DISCOURSE: WYATT, DONNE, POPE, WORDSWORTH

Sir Thomas Wyatt, in spite of what we think to be his rich Petrarchan heritage, was not one to start off Elizabethan poetry in a blaze of adjectives. His richness came not from poetic qualification but rather from poetic figure; he preferred working on two levels of thought to elaborating one. Therefore he was sparing with adjectives; did not find them necessary to lovemaking or the pointing of morals; did not see fit to smooth out his iambics with their filling grace. The poetry he left in 1542 was very conservatively epithetical, containing only about seven adjectives in ten lines. Rondeau I, as an example, is conservative, epitheting for balance but never piling up terms, following the concept rather than leading or coloring it.

Behold love, thy power how she dispiseth:
My great payne, how little she regardeth:
The holy oth, whereof she taketh no cure
Broken she hath: and yet she bideth sure
Right at her ease, and little she dreedeth.

Wepened thou art, and she unarmed sitteth:
To the disdaynful her liff she ledeth:
To me spitefull withoute cause or mesur.

Behold love.

I ame in hold: if pitie the meveth,
Goo bend thy bowe, that stony hertes breketh,
And with some stroke revenge the displeasur
Of the and him, that sorrowe doeth endur,
And as his lorde the lowly entreateth.

Behold love.

This complaint to Love against the untrustworthy, spiteful, stony-hearted lady, by Love’s servant Wyatt, is straight from a madrigal of Petrarch, but in English words. Of the English words, the adjectives have little primary to say. Payne is meaningful without great, and oth without holy. Disdaynfull and spitefull carry the theme already set. The balance of Wepened with unarmed and the use of stony with hertes are the most vivid and contributive, and all three terms are
Miles: Adjectives in English Poetry

enclosed within a figure of speech which is itself vivid, the bending of the bow of Love. The adjectives are minor auxiliaries, therefore; in a small way they repeat the idea of the poem. They are of attitude, largely; for even the sensory stony is figurative in summary of attitude.

So are most of Wyatt's adjectives, through the whole substance of his poetry, terms of attitude. The eight he uses more than any others are, in order of amount, good, great, true, just, sure, cruel, dead, dear. 

Fair, little, long follow close, at twenty times apiece or more. Most of these evaluate, with a valuation of personal relationship which is characteristic of Wyatt's themes. Most of the terms he shares with Chaucer in major emphasis, and with poets of his own time; but the three closest his own central theme of the war of love, just, sure, and cruel, are most individually his. They modify, in context, the pronouns of the conflict, you and I, he and she, and man himself, and love itself, as the other major terms specify further the realm of human reason, of cause, intent, and will, of pain, desire, folly, storm, and wrong.

In other words, Wyatt worked in a small, closely cultivated subject matter, and qualified it constantly with a few terms highly meaningful to him. The matter, as his readers well know, centers in the relation of lover to lady; of good, pleasure, and desire, to pain, cruelty, and death. So, just as his main adjectives apply to this world of personal intent, his main words of all kinds and forms do also, being these: heart, love, life, pain, see, good, death, thought, true, know, please, all used more than a hundred times apiece, and thus all frequently conditioned by the major adjectives, besides the two here, which are so closely a part of the same realm of thought.¹

Now many of these major nouns and verbs had already by Wyatt's time been established as central to poetic vocabulary, as one may suppose to general vocabulary. But heart, thought, and outstandingly pain and pleasure were his own emphases clearly, since they were not major for Chaucer, Marlowe, Spenser, or Shakespeare, since pleasure is major for only one other, and pain for no other poet for whom we have a concordance. It is possible to come closer and closer to the heart of

¹ Veré Rubel notes as aspects of the Wyatt Chaucerian and courtier idiom copied by Tudor poets his compounds, participials, and -y adjectives. None of these types was strong in comparison with later uses, however. Poetic Diction in the English Renaissance, chap. iv.
Wyatt’s work, then, as we look more narrowly at the words, the subject matters, and modifications which he consistently and characteristically employed. And we see how our impressions of the songs and sonnets justly essentialize themselves in the major adjectives with their nouns, in the cruel, sure, and just, heart, pleasure, and pain which Wyatt in his century emphasized distinctively.

The combination of these stressed terms serves also, I believe, to suggest alteration of such standard comments on Wyatt’s attitude as Mr. Tillyard’s, “Despair, not fruition, is the lot of the Petrarchan lover: ‘Fair is my love and cruel as she’s fair’ is his burden.” Wyatt’s constant repetition and juxtaposition of terms stresses the theme not of despair over fruition but of the mutable mixture of pleasure with pain, indeed often the identity of the two. Love is cruel, death is present in life, dearness tyrannizes, false and true are words often paired, and the just, the sure, the good, the great, in judgment, desire, faith, and reason, and heart and thought, are assailed by the foe, the tyrant, of heart and thought, the storm of love, the cruelty of death. This is the poetry of the major words. It is a poetry wherein both positive and negative terms are major, and are interallied. It is a poetry of personal feeling not in terms of feeling so much as in terms of standards of relation: the true, good, and expectable in love together with the cruelty, pain, and death in it. The feelings are mixed, therefore, and the poetry is in the conflict rather than the resolution. The fight is never, in poem after poem, in point after point, in line after line, or even, as here in word upon word, won or lost.

With the generalization that Wyatt’s major adjectives enforce the theme of conflict which all his major words establish, and with some sense of essential idea rising from the juxtaposition of terms, it is possible to see his individual single poems again with fairer expectation and clearer satisfaction. In the first rondeau observed, the balanced placing and functioning of adjectives is clearly for good reason. The great pain and stony heart, the wepened and unarmed are characteristically set in the rondeau frame and refrain of Behold love. The sureness of the lady’s self-possession stands against the weapons of love.

The poem is a specification of Wyatt's kind of thought in expression. The same is true of the sonnets, also in the main patterned upon Petrarch. The first of the sonnets states as theme, indeed, the very bond between positive and negative which the lists of major words indicate. Care is cloaked in sport and play, says this sonnet. The mind hides every passion by color contrary. The second sonnet gives the terms another variation. Here love the warrior in heart and thought displeases the lady with his hardiness, he is outlawed to forest and field, and Wyatt there follows him to live and die, for the good life is the faithful life. Here are the major terms again: love camping in heart and thought as in a field, to love and suffice paired, and trust and lust, the displeasure of the lady, the payn of love, the hertes forrest, to lyve and dye, and goode is the lif which ends faithfully. Exterior objects, the banner and field of this poem like the bow of the rondeau, are deeply subordinate to the poem's greater problems, namely, the standard of good, the faithful life, and the constant coupling of love and suffering, living and dying. The field is a battlefield, the bow a weapon, and so only by dint of their figurative bodily power break into the poetry of human difficulty. The adjectives themselves, as usual, are partly active, spreding and leving, partly descriptive, as in bold, partly of standard, as in good.

The long love that in my thought doeth harbar:
And in myn hert doeth kepe his residence:
Into my face preseth with bolde pretence:
And therein campeth spreding his baner.
She that me lerneth to love and suffre:
And willes that my trust and lustes negligence
Be rayned by reason, shame, and reverence:
With his hardines taketh displeasure.
Where with all unto the hertes forrest he fleith:
Leving his enterprise with payn and cry:
And ther him hideth and not appereth.
What may I do when my maister fereth?
But in the feld with him to lyve and dye?
For goode is the lif, ending faithfully.

In his standard work on Early Tudor Poetry, J. M. Berdan used this sonnet to illustrate Wyatt's characteristic weakness, not of phrasing,
which he largely ignored, but of technique in versification. After pointing out the awkwardness of Wyatt’s accents on weak syllables, he quoted Surrey’s rendition of the same Petrarchan sonnet to show its greater success at smoothness: “although this version is as literal as the other, by abandoning the rime-scheme of the Italian sonnet, the difficulty of the rendition has been greatly decreased.” Two facts shown by the comparison are of especial interest to our study: first, that a common source poem does not make for a common vocabulary; and second, that another device which Surrey used for the effect of smoothness, besides accent and rhyme scheme, was the increase, in fact the doubling, of adjective vocabulary.

Love that doth raine and live within my thought 
and buylt his seat within my captuye brest 
clad in the armes wherein with me he fowght 
oft in my face he doth his baner rest 
But she that tawght me love and suffre paine 
my doubtfull hope and eke my hote desire 
with shamfast looke to shadoe and refrayne 
her smyling grace convertyth streight to yre 
And cowarde Love then to the hart apace

taketh his flight where he doth lork and playne 
his purpose lost, and dare not shew his face. 
for my lordes gilt thus fawtles bide I payne; 
yet from my Lorde shall not my foote remove 
sweet is the death that taketh end by love.

Whatever the fidelity of the two to Petrarch, it is certain that Wyatt and Surrey are different poets in their taste for language, specifically in respect to their taste for adjectives. Surrey’s captuye, clad, doubtfull, hote, shamfast, smyling, cowarde, lost, fawtles, sweet are far away from Wyatt’s longe, bolde, spreding, leving, goode, ending. They are at once more picturable and more interpretive, more sensable—that is, perceivable by the senses,—and more explanatory. They are expansive adjectives. No one of them is the same as one of Wyatt’s, and most are used in different places, to elaborate rather than to identify. There are fewer adjectives of action; more shadings of feeling; and noteworthy in the place where both use an adjective, to begin the last line, is the

replacement of Wyatt’s standard of **good** by Surrey’s quality of **sweet**: much of the difference between the two sonnets lies in this single difference. We have not the means to contrast the two poets in general detail, since a concordance has not been made for Surrey. But this one contrast does serve to emphasize the nature of Wyatt’s method, his sober, undecorative use of adjectives, his stress on participles and on abstract terms such as **good** and **true** and **just** and **sure**.

In order to explore the medium between a single poem, on the one hand, and major words for all the works, on the other, I have taken note of the adjective texture of all the first thousand lines of Wyatt’s poems, including, that is, the rondeaus, epigrams, sonnets, and some of the miscellaneous lyrics. The frequency, as I have suggested, is about seven adjectives in ten lines. Twenty per cent of these adjectives are **quantity** words, such as all, no, any, each, every, some, one, and so on. Another 20 per cent are participles, active and passive, and I think they may be summarized by the two words **tossing** and **weried**; most, that is, are words of active personal disturbance (crying, dispering, quaking, erring, hoping, doting, fayning, dreming, trusting, burnynge), or of passive endurance (chayned, bayted, begiled, ystricken, blynded, dismayed, spent, joynde). The final 60 per cent are all the other modifying adjectives, and most, as we should expect for Wyatt, are fairly abstract, stating relationship (vain, false, dangerous, deadly, faithfull, wofull, pitifull, weak, cruel, imperfect, uncertain, unkind, unstable, mutable, variable, strange, subtle). Only a dozen or so present qualities to be directly sensed (bitter, bright, brittle, cloudy, craggy, crysped, dark, gray, pale, drye, salt, sharp, stony). It is immediately to be seen, too, how these quality adjectives are subordinated to the thematic tone set by the rest of the terms. Wyatt does not attempt by them to convey impressions of objects, but rather to figure forth concepts by a slight concretizing. His most thorough use of adjectives of sense comes, as for example in Epigram 19, where in the conventional Continental manner he is building up a simile for feeling:

From thes hye hilles as when a spryng doth fall.  
It trylleth downe with still and suttyll course:  
... So faryth love when he hath tan a sorse;
Furthermore, he does not pile up these epithets. Few nouns in the poems—even in the sonnets, which so call for easy iambic adjectives—are favored with more than one. Craggy rocks, barren plains, hard thoughts, wofull mind, bright bemes, joyfull jolitie, are the usual combinations in the thousand lines, with sometimes such fuller phrases as my dere and cruell foo.

Positive and negative terms work together throughout this text as we observed them in the individual poems and the major lists. In addition to the major dear and cruel, there are, in somewhat less amounts, fair and false, happy and sad, new and old, deep and high, bright and dark, and such repeated terms as poor, strange, little, long, hard, glad. Among the great variety of more infrequently used terms, the unpleasant and gloomy ones at least equal the pleasant, and are constantly combined with them in accordance with Wyatt's pleasure-in-pain principle as we have seen it exemplified. A notable proportion of the terms of gloom are terms of instability and mutability, of uncertain, unstable, variable, unstedfast, unquiet, brittle, doubtful, unsure, wavering, lost. Against these, long and true are the great terms.

From the general character of the adjectives in a thousand lines of verse, then, we gain substantiations of the descriptive speculations already risen from a poem, on the one hand, and a total vocabulary list, on the other. The major-adjective list suggested emphasis on abstract standards and on the tension of opposites in human relationship; the major-word list suggested the general human field where these applied; the specific application of these major terms indicated the range of reference in love and life and death; single poems illustrated Wyatt's pattern of use for these terms and concepts, his even and often balanced restraint in epithet. The entire thousand lines bear out these general lines of emphasis, and show in detail upon detail, variation upon variation, the shadings and still the clear outlines of the main poetic emphases. So the great number of adjectives beyond the limiting and participial adjectives are abstract in reference, applying to relationship, and often paired in contrast or opposed in the

* Note the rare fuller description of a hand, "So long, so small, so round."
structure of the poem. So even the participles are almost wholly of human attitude and reception. So the qualities of things, their sensible aspects, even the beauty of the thematic lady, are not dwelt upon or piled up, and are used mainly in figures to support the themes or attitudes. So the adjectives structurally are dispersed and spare and do not tend to repeat anything the substantives are capable of indicating. So, finally, in the thousand lines, the terms are given a body and context: the weight upon the concept of sureness, justness, and truth set against a greatly fickle, mutable, unstable, and death-bringing world more fully even than against the fickleness of love and lady; the meaning of death, pain, and cruelty altered by their suspensions against pleasure in conflict; and the whole repeated special story of the quarrel with the lady, a larger, greater story in the major terms of the quarrel of life and death, the poise of pain and pleasure, the dere and cruell nature of human love in the mutable world.

A hundred years after Wyatt’s death, and more than once in the decade after his own, were published the Works of a poet, John Donne, who continued and extremely bettered the poetry of conversation, the off-beat verse, the metaphysic of love in life. Professor Tillyard says of Wyatt that “no one till Suckling can converse so easily in a lyric,” and of Donne that he carried on the tradition of Wyatt, leading “the Elizabethan drama he loved into the Elizabethan lyric he despised.” Donne, both by control of rhythm and by complexity of sense, had more to say than Wyatt, and I want specifically to search out what he had learned and saw fit to do with the problem of modification in topic and arrangement, what had become of the poetic adjective in his century. Wyatt’s editor, Miss Foxwell, praises Wyatt’s use of language by saying: “the whole body of his work records that fleeting and lovely efflorescence of our language in the days of the early Tudors, eternally preserved in the versions of the Great Bible, which may be detected in the writers of the Paston letters, and which was caught and reflected by Wyatt in the simple, manly, picturesque English which he has employed alike for poem, letter, or dispatch, a style yet unspoiled by the ‘heavy ponderosity’ of Latinized English, or

* Tillyard, op. cit., pp. 41, 36.
the bizarre quips and turns in which the imitators of Guevara and the euphuistic writers delighted." The question, then, may well be how much Donne, who follows in these footsteps, has been "spoiled" by the elaborations of the century, how much he values "simple, manly, picturesque English," what indeed has poetry got to, as seen through the formal nature and pattern of its adjectives for microscope.

First of all, it may be outstandingly noted that the major "simple and manly" adjectives were maintained through the century. Donne, like Wyatt, used dead, good, great, true, fair more than other adjectives. So, moreover, did the other poets for whom there is available information, Chaucer, Marlowe, Spenser, Shakespeare, all before Donne. With the small exception of dead for Chaucer and true for Chaucer and Spenser, these five adjectives, as far as we know, were constantly central. They lay in the theme of constancy upon which, until 1640, the poetry of many decades made variations. After 1640, even in the poetry of Donne's later contemporaries like Herbert, this theme in these adjectives began quickly to fade and was never again strong. Donne and Wyatt, then, were bound by a bond which held them not only to each other but to the whole century which they marked.

They differ in four major adjectives: Donne's bad, last, new, old, for Wyatt's cruel, just, sure, dear. The first three for each are idiosyncratic; they are shared with no one else in their time. So we find no opposition between them specifically, but merely special traits. On the face of these differing terms, out of context, it is clear that the very words Donne has failed to emphasize are Wyatt's most characteristic words of personal attitude and relationship. Donne has maintained a negative term, though a different one, and then a repeated concern for time which seems, offhand, hard to relate in such strong measure to his verse as we know it.

We turn to the context words modified for some further elucidation. It will be remembered that Wyatt's use of the adjectives of standard which were common to his time was devoted to internal application. Good, great, and true modified such substantives as reason, intent, desire, trust, love, faith, and heart. For Donne the substantives are very

different in the main: fools, civility, husbands, songs, morrow, subsidies, heights, Prince, enemies, love, burden, chamber, earthquake, organ, circles, woman, death, marriages, Paradise, worth, virtue, alchemy. This appears immediately a more outward and a more active world. The words look busy even in the straits of a list. Further, it is a mixed world, hard to circumscribe in its given terms, not nearly so obviously self-consistent as Wyatt’s, though measured and modified by the same standard epithets. Looking at Donne’s major phrases, one cannot tell just what are his major contents: his nouns are not his subjects; and this is as warm a clue to the debated nature of “metaphysical” poetry as one is apt to find. At any rate it is to be noted that good, great, and true work on the multiple levels of his world. Fair and dead, the other main adjectives which he shares, are equally various in application, modifying the same sort of nouns: woman, ship, house, angel, city, bride, kingdom, world, men; and, strongly, I, and she, dead, in mourning tone, anticipation, and stress upon the state of death.

This emphasis on an end explains, too, the singular abundance of the adjective last in Donne’s poetry. The poets preceding him used it in the main adverbially, as at last. For Donne it is repeatedly important as modifier in one sense: last day, last gasp, last kiss, last will, last bed, last act, last soul, last fires, last resurrection, last hour. So the concept demonstrably runs through his work. And it is allied with his other special terms new and old by his interest in time and change, which is like Wyatt’s but is far more definitely considered. Old applies not only to old men, in the descriptive sense, but also to standards, fashions, stories, with some sense of affection yet ridicule. Remember that the world is changing, Donne seems often to suggest. So his new modifies worlds, taxes, lands, nature, stars, fashions, creatures, Philosophy, and Physicke, as well as more immediate loves, friends, and faults.

Donne’s fourth special adjective, bad, represents a wider and more philosophical concern with the negative than Wyatt’s cruel. It is significant that the one noun which Donne added to the list of major nouns in his time was soul; his emphasis, like Wyatt’s, was inward
upon relationships, but upon relationships wider than Wyatt's: not only of lovers in a mutable world, but of soul to that very world itself.

The connection between the two poets, as suggested by their major adjectives in context, is one of strong bond in these respects: in central concern with the standards of goodness and truth in love; in little emphasis on beauty; in a full preoccupation with the mutability of standards, the fickleness of love, the imminence of death. Largely, then, the frame was the same, a great world of terms for truth and death shared in common with the century, as not later to be shared. And specifically the frame was the same, in that the poems of each were love poems, often addressed to love, and concerned elaborately and figuratively with the game and the battle of it. But here we begin to see the great difference in technique as in philosophy, and the connection of these in the term “metaphysical.” Wyatt's way, as his adjective phrases have shown, was to write topically of love and its difficulties, with use of outward objects like weapons and battlefields as figures for working over the point, and with a constant running theme stated and implied in each piece of the conflict of life and death, as of dearness and cruelty, in the uncertain world. His subject was literal relationship in love; his device was assorted figure; his theme was mutability.

Donne's subject, by the same token, was the relationship of lovers to the world they were in. Their conflict more assumed and accepted, their central problem was shared: how do two souls manage together in this various world, with the close threat of evil and death, and a new time growing out of the old-fashioned old? For this subject the device was not illustrative simile, because that kept the relation with the world too distant, but rather radical metaphor which by farfetched made as close as possible the alliance between outer objects and inner feelings. Donne's theme and his implications, by his very implicating of so much more of the physical world and time, are more directly centered than Wyatt's in the nature of human souls. Behind Wyatt's reiterated feelings is a sort of opposing universe as well as lady; behind Donne's busily participating universe are more complex problems of the soul, in the lightest poems.
Look for illustration of these generalizations at a specific poem, "The Good-Morrow":

I wonder by my troth, what thou, and I
Did, till we lov'd? were we not wean'd till then?
But suck'd on countrey pleasures, childishly?
Or snorted we in the seaven sleepers den?
T'was so; but this, all pleasures fancies bee.
If ever any beauty I did see,
Which I desir'd, and got, 'twas but a dreame of thee.

And now good morrow to our waking soules,
Which watch not one another out of feare;
For love, all love of other sightes controules
And makes one little roome, an everywhere.
Let sea-discoverers to new worlds have gone,
Let Maps to other, worlds on worlds have showne,
Let us possesse one world, each hath one, and is one.

My face in thine eye, thine in mine appeares,
And true plaine hearts doe in the faces rest,
Where can we finde two better hemispheres
Without sharpe North, without declining West?
What ever dyes, was not mixt equally;
If our two loves be one, or, thou and I
Love so alike, that none doe slacken, none can die.

Here are Wyatt's thou and I, but not the trouble between them; they are not attracted poles, but become one. Here is Wyatt’s mutability, but the two can get the best of it. The good is the morrow, the world is new, the hearts are true and plaine, and countrey pleasures, sharpe North, and declining West all set off these virtues, by contrast but not conflict. The concept of the equal mixture of love is made complex and more lively by its participation in the explicit world of the seven sleepers, discoverers, geographers, astronomers.

The structural treatment of adjectives here is much like Wyatt’s. The proportion is the same, as in the Songs and Sonets as a whole, seven adjectives in ten lines. The adjectives are distributed, not piled up. There are few, or no, adjectives of sheer sense description; sharpe North is the nearest in appearance, but it is full of technical concept. There is the central standard: true hearts and better hemispheres. Per-
haps the greatest difference in Donne's adjectives here is his repetition of, and play on, such small words as one. In "Let us possesse one world, each hath one, and is one," and "If our two loves be one... none can die," the meaning of one changes slightly each time, becomes less adjectival and more pronominal by the omission of the nouns. In this variation lies the theme and climax of the poem: the shift by analogy and an effect of logical structure from oneness in each other's eyes at a morning glance, to oneness in immortality. So where Wyatt balanced, paired, and opposed his guiding epithets, Donne steered a meaning through his, to arrive at new meanings out of old.

The other poems in the Songs and Sonets bear out these emphases. Donne lists adjectives seldom, though often nouns and verbs, and when he does, there is often the cumulative meaning of "But truly keepes his first, last, everlasting day." "Love's Infinitenesse" works to the point of oneness through various shadings of the word new—new love, new fears, new growth, new rewards. The standards of true and false, good and bad are less opposed than contained together in what is for Donne commonly called paradox, the suspension of irreconcilables, in such poems as "Twicknam Garden," "The Dreame," "The Message," "Love's Deitie." The adjectives of sense quality are throughout used sparingly; sometimes with direct intent to qualify, as in "dull privations and leane emptiness," but largely with irony, as in the well-known use of the adjective brown for the lady, or in imitation too, as in "The Baite":

Come live with mee, and bee my love,  
And we will some new pleasures prove  
Of golden sands, and christall brookes,  
With silken lines, and silver hookes.

Which becomes, in the sixth stanza,

Let coarse bold hands, from slimy nest  
The bedded fish in banks out-wrest,  
Or curious traitors, sleavesilke flies  
Bewitch poore fishes wandring eyes.

Donne clearly doesn't hold much with the silken and the silver epithet. In "The Sunne Rising" his maintained theme of the lovers' unified
world is devised by a homely name-calling of the sun; here again is one of the few poems to build solidly on qualifying by describing, and it does not do so seriously:

Busie old foole, unruly Sunne,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windowes, and through curtaines call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?
Sawcy pedantique wretch, goe chide
Late schoole boyes, and sowre prentices,
Goe tell Court-huntsmen, that the King will ride,
Call countrey ants to harvest offices;
Love, all alike, no season knowes, nor clyme,
Nor houres, dayes, moneths, which are the rags of time.

The adjective when even slightly elaborate is, for Donne, part of the joke. On the other hand, the common adjective of concept he is perfectly willing to make bear his theme, as in the one and the new which we noted. A poem outstanding for such use, and a good one for summarizing this characteristic of Donne's, is "Communitie," wherein goodness and badness are the theme which leads to the final figure of the fruit and the idea of indifference.

Good we must love, and must hate ill,
For ill is ill, and good good still,
But there are things indifferent,
Which wee may neither hate, nor love,
But one, and then another prove,
As wee shall finde our fancy bent.

If then at first wise Nature had
Made women either good or bad,
Then some might wee hate, and some chuse,
But since shee did them so create,
That we may neither love, nor hate,
Onely this rests, All, all may use.

If they were good it would be seene,
Good is as visible as greene,
And to all eyes it selfe betrayes:
If they were bad, they could not last,
Bad doth it selfe, and others wast,
So, they deserve not blame, nor praise.
But they are ours as fruits are ours,
He that but tastes, he that devours,
And he that leaves all, doth as well:
Chang’d loves are but chang’d sorts of meat,
And when hee hath the kernel eate,
Who doth not fling away the shell?

Indeed it may be justly said that for Donne, as he says here for himself, “Good is as visible as greene,” and that is why he uses the good words, the most conceptual, the least sensory, so often. Donne is a sensory poet, but in objects and actions; he is in fact mainly a poet of objects and actions. Even less than Wyatt he relies on epithets for substance; his adjectives, as these few poems illustrate, characteristically either satirize themselves or modulate an idea conceptually, not descriptively. They are part of Donne’s essay form.

Now it may be well to see how these sampling generalizations are borne out and modified by the total mass of adjectives in a thousand lines of Songs and Sonets. Of these near seven hundred adjectives, seven in ten lines, like Wyatt’s (though I think a larger proportion would be found in the religious poems), 30 per cent are quantity labels, 15 per cent participial, 55 per cent general modifying. There is thus less emphasis on the last two categories than for Wyatt, and actually also less than for any other of the ten poets studied. Donne’s greater emphasis, as we have already noted in the few poems observed, is upon the variations to be found in such unobtrusive modifiers as one, and other, and all. As one-third of all his adjective uses, they are at least 10, often 20, per cent more than in other poets. As for participles, they are probably fewer because Donne tended to use straight verbs. The participles are more active than Wyatt’s, with working and made as typical, rather than tossing and weried; that is, again they are less of internal feeling and more of outer action: waking, seizing, scattering, dying, living, loving, angling, and attri’d, placed, compar’d, wrought, canoniz’d, busied, increased, surrounded, mixt, fain’d.

The pattern of the general qualifiers illustrates again the play of Donne’s mind and skill over a few major terms. About one-fourth of all these uses is confined to the nine major adjectives alone, as compared to one-sixth or less for Wyatt. One of every four adjectives is
good or new or last, and so on. So Donne works through the developing of single common meanings. He uses a few more sensory adjectives than Wyatt: bright, bony, cold, crystall, dark, dry, feeble, foul, brown, gray, green, golden, silver, white, slimy, silken, sharp, salt, sweet, sour, spungie; many of these are Wyatt’s words too, and the general kind is the same. Donne tended sometimes to use these qualitative terms with irony, we remember, so it is not surprising that they name the common poetic qualities in the century. As for the rest of Donne’s general adjectives, they are extremely miscellaneous, appearing few times apiece and in special contexts with their nouns from the active world: prophane, pedantique, harvest, usurious, plaguie, litigious, reverend, ruinous, medicinall, angelique, all are of the character of the nouns already listed for Donne, from various realms, in metaphysical connection with the active soul. There are adjectives, too, second in amount only to the major ones, adjectives like poor, little, sure, strange, and sweet, which for Donne are adjectives of attitude, almost of comment, expressing, like his major old, a mixture of amusement, impatience, and affection. All of this minority provided a respectable minority for Wyatt too, since these are adjectives of attitude.

Thus, it may be said that “simple and manly” diction of Wyatt survived to Donne and was fostered by him. Most major and minor adjectives of attitude and standard maintained their force. The terms of sense qualities were much the same. Great positives and negatives in life and love were still set together in the frame of the song and the sonnet to the lady. Modification as a kind of poetizing retained its proportion and its relative spareness, its conceptual rather than sensory function.

Within this continuity a major change is accurately visible. It is visible in the replacing of Wyatt’s major terms of relation, dear and cruel, sure and just, by Donne’s major terms for time, last and old and new, terms for outer world as well as inner. The change is visible in the nouns which are modified by these terms, from the major heart to the major soul, and from nouns of feeling to nouns of the world’s business in astronomy and geography. The change is visible in the
great bulk of adjectives in a thousand lines: Donne’s stress on outward directed participles, on one and all, and a few major terms rather than a variety, and again on special singular terms for special fields of knowledge rather than the intense field of inner feeling. The change is visible finally and most wholly in the whole poems themselves, as Donne’s structures make clear what shift in value controlled his variation of the common pattern of modification. Simply, as we have seen, it was a shift from a theme of conflict to a theme of paradox, as the great opposites of good and bad, true and false, moved from the heart to the soul, from dear and cruel to new and old, from lovers poised apart in a universe again apart and unusable except by simile, to lovers taking unto themselves together the many disparities of a universe daily and active, not just flickly mutable, but becoming new, and acceptable in metaphor by the soul.

A century later, at his death in 1744, the poet who had the attending ear of the populace and the accepting ear of other poets was notably Pope. The era and nature of his influence seems a long way off from Donne’s, even farther than Donne from Wyatt’s, since the time of the businessman had arrived and the common man was supposed to be reasonable. The effect on adjectives of such social change is hard to imagine. Pope was Donne’s sort in that he was a poet of talk more than song or picture; the philosophical talk of each was in a vein central to his time, and in a tone of satire. What bonds underlay their work are hard to discern specifically; but we can at least inquire how they shared the problem of adjective usage, how they differed in feeling for modification, how slowly the mass of poetic device moves from century to century.

In major terms the movement seems not to have been great. Pope was using in the early seventeen hundreds just the adjectives Donne had stressed in the early sixteen hundreds: the now familiar good, great, fair, new, and old. He had discarded, however, Donne’s bad, dead, last, and true, and added one new term, soft. One notes that his list of major terms is shorter, only six, in a proportion where the other poets show eight or ten outstanding. This means that Pope simply did not constantly use so many adjectives with special emphasis: their
meanings were less all-pervasive. The six adjectives which appear in amounts next largest are still of sixteenth-century emphasis, or earlier, Chaucer’s high and wise, Marlowe’s poor and proud, except that as Pope added soft to the fullest level, here at the next level he added the Miltonic happy, both what we should call Romantic contributions. Note too the continuance, visible when these secondary emphases are added, of terms of attitude, happy, poor, proud, like Wyatt’s primary cruel, dear, just, sure, and Donne’s secondary poor, sure, strange. Looking deeper than the first half-dozen words, then, one can see scattered early alliances in Pope’s adjective types; but most emphatically noteworthy in his brief major list are the likeness to Donne and the single contribution of the curious adjective soft.

The likeness to Donne extends not only through the adjectives of standard which all the poets up to Pope share, but also through Donne’s own characteristic new and old. The standard dead and true which Pope lacks seem to have been abandoned, after Donne, by Herbert and Milton very decisively. So Pope agrees with these two predecessors in his omission of words long major, but the clue to soft does not come from them, since their main words make no innovations of this kind, nor does soft itself begin to be important numerically for any of them. For Pope the term is used to modify a mixture of topics inner and outer: gifts, illusions, alarm, sorrows, on the one hand; gales, zephyrs, streams, on the other. Here is a new world for us, where feelings and natural forces blend in this way by sharing the same descriptive quality.

It is to be expected, also, that good and great will have changed their reference. They modify now not just the feelings of Wyatt, the physical world of Donne, but outstandingly a social world: of art, wit, guide, cause, Queen, stage, Bishop, man, Lady, works, sense, Father, Mother, Cibber, Homer, Victor, rogue, errors, affairs—a context clearly of general social judgment. Fair, too, now modifies a more outer world, of dales, fields, Thames, flow’rs, as well as Peace, Fame, and Liberty, the social activities. Donne’s new and old are not contrasts in attitude any more, but merely balanced in reference to age, glory, world, and song. The change with which Pope is concerned is less
of the universe and more of ages and stages, to be neither feared nor heralded, but to be accepted. None of the major nouns modified by all these terms is idiosyncratic except his friend; this, too, is part of the context in which we seem to see Pope working, a context of city associates and country breezes. But still this noun context does not help much to explain Pope’s innovation of a sense adjective in soft, or his fundamental lack of stress on any few major adjectives except a handful of standard ones.

The bulk of a thousand lines of adjectives, however, provides an answer, and what a bulk it is after Wyatt and Donne, an increase by almost a half, to ten or eleven adjectives in every ten lines! The proportion of limiting to participial to quality adjectives is standard enough, with no extreme emphasis like Donne’s. It is the nature of the mass of adjectives that is new. The difference between Pope’s styles, notably between the philosophical general style of the Essay on Man, for example, and the more descriptive and emotional narrative style of Eloisa to Abelard, creates some problems for discussion. But since the main point is that even the philosophical Essay on Man makes more of descriptive adjectives than we have seen before, I shall use it as a provisional representative and refer to the Eloisa as an extreme of the descriptive type.

In the Essay on Man, Pope works over his major terms only half as much as Donne did before him, or in proportion of a tenth. But, on the other hand, the terms of sense quality are greater, more varied, and of a new kind. Whereas Wyatt’s and Donne’s were on the order of dry, sharp, cold, Pope’s are giddy, vast, argent, fiery, dull, flow’ry, watry, nectarous, balmy, vivid, cloudless, aromatic, green, dim, vernal, thin, ethereal, meteor-like, mazy, sour, wild, golden, cool, fresh, fine, iron, yellow, peaceful, boundless, gay. Clear in this list is the new emphasis which Pope was placing on the qualities of natural objects, mostly streams, fields, and skies, not Donne’s items of science, as they impressed the human senses and feelings. The terms are half perceiving, half responding, as the mixture appears in balmy, mazy, fresh, gay, for example. The seventeenth century’s word of this possible mixed kind was sweet, yet neither Wyatt nor Donne used it with im-
plications of strong sensation, but rather with emphasis on valuation, as in fair also. Now even the abstract reasoning of the Essay on Man carries a larger burden of interest in sensation, the -y adjectives are created to characterize by quality, and the range of sights especially increases with the range of terms.

In the Eloisa this new emphasis results in a complete new texture. Where in Donne's love poems the major nine adjectives of time and standard amounted to a fourth of all, in this love poem the miscellaneous and various adjectives of sense, no single one repeated more than a half-dozen times, make up a fourth of all; and Pope's primary terms are almost as scant as Donne's terms of sense. Thus the intrusion of the adjective soft into Pope's brief, inherited list of major terms is justly to be noted as signal of almost complete reversal of adjective method in the text as a whole. These are the words of Eloisa: deep, darksome, rugged, horrid, cold, warm, silent, soft, beauteous, lambent, dim, light, bloody, pale, delicious, bright, silver, spiry, blank, tender, hollow, twilight, dusky, black, gloomy, browner, golden, white, keen, dreary, cool, mild, gay, calm, roseate, silver. Now all these, like Pope's primary soft and secondary happy, are terms which in our day we tend to call Romantic, because now we tend to connect such interest in quality and sensation and described nature, especially soft, pale, bright, and dreary, with the poetry of Keats and Shelley as heart and center. Professor Bateson in his history of poetic language has pointed out the weakening effects on poetry of such adjectival force. I do not wish here either to discuss the application of the term Pre-Romantic to

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1 There has been so much pro-and-con discussion of eighteenth-century poetic diction that one hesitates to sift opinion. Certainly a major point on which most agree is the generalizing power of the favorite vocabulary. What seemed significant was the trait of likeness, the trait often sensory and always part of the system of characteristics which put each thing in its proper place. The adjective was therefore very helpful, in fact essential to significant poeties, and was more and more constructed from other parts of speech. Geoffrey Tillotson, On the Poetry of Pope, pp. 63–70, shows a large proportion of adjectives in his list of eighteenth-century favorite words, in anxious, pensive, sad, sylvan, pale, refulgent, and the present and past participles from the Latin. He traces this vocabulary not as traditionally to Pope's Iliad, but back to Du Bartas, Sylvester, Drayton, and the nonmetaphysical seventeenth-century poets. Thus he raises the interesting question of the innovative power of minor poets.

Robert Lathrop Sharp in From Donne to Dryden, contrasting Spenserian "melodie, clarte, abondance" to Donne's harshness, subtlety, economy, points out (p. 116) the anti-Donne tradition in the adjective of Denham: "Turning to Denham, one discovers, along with the regular beat of Waller, that the adjective is settling into its place in neoclassic imagery. The thing de-
Pope or to weigh Professor Bateson's judgment, because these considerations involve larger classifications and more absolute standards of value than are here relevant. The point for us is simply the increase in potentiality of one large function of language, the adjectival, and one large aspect of experience, the sensational; both can be classified and evaluated in many ways; both at least enrich the possibilities of poetic expression.

The rest of Pope's adjectives, between the major on the one hand and the variety of special sense terms on the other, parallel Wyatt's and Donne's adjectives of emotion, though now with stress on sad and awful in Eloisa, and also on such terms as holy and eternal to fit the theme. In the Essay on Man, too, such repeated terms, in addition to emotional ones, as wise, immortal, eternal, future, human, weak, mean, low, natural, heavenly, general, proper, perfect, common, just, superior, strong, serve to evaluate by standards, not so much like the Elizabethans' of man to man in justness, goodness, and truth, but in relation of God to man and nature, which is the theme of the Essay. Human, general, eternal, proper are especially characteristic of this major modification by Pope of the vocabulary of standards: gone now are the personal bonds within the mutable or shared universe, and present are the standards set by the universe itself. Conflict and paradox have become gradation; and terms of negative aspect, in proportion equal to Donne's, in meaning are employed not only to be accepted but to be resolved by the general whole.

scribed is dignified and made more general; the meaning stops at it and does not go beyond it into the abstract regions pointed to by the concrete symbols of the metaphysicals."

Spence's Anecdotes makes Pope's participation in the Spenser-Milton tradition clear. He named them with Chaucer and Dryden as England's greatest poets, and Spenser with Waller and Dryden as his early favorites. In his time, Spenser, Milton, Thomson were called descriptive or imaginative, Donne witty. Spence, pp. 122, 129, 351. So, too, F. W. Bateson, in English Poetry and the English Language, constantly contrasts seventeenth- and eighteenth-century organic-metaphysical and cumulative-baroque, with Pope as transitional. But by the time of Vicesimus Knox's Essays, 1782, Pope was classed as opposed to the Spenser-Milton party, Bateson, pp. 86-91. It has been common among critics since Wordsworth to see something wrong, something too "denotative," in modern terms, with the poetry which Pope led toward, though some blame it for late classicism, others for early romanticism. Thus David Daiches, Poetry in the Modern World, p. 29, fails to find the problem of double vision from Dryden to Tennyson, as Wordsworth missed images from nature, and Housman called the poetry of the whole era sham. Pope's adjectives show the heart of the confusion and derogation. In major terms they are social, general, 'classical'; in the mass of secondary terms they are sweeping Miltonic descriptiveness into its eighteenth-century glory. As an 'experimental' poet, then, Pope makes best sense.
The beginning of the Essay on Man itself provides little example of major adjective content, but good example of the sort of statement structure which tended to foster the use of many adjectives, the two-part line:

Awake, my St. John! leave all meaner things
To low ambition, and the pride of Kings.
Let us (since Life can little more supply
Than just to look about us and to die)
Expatiate free o'er all this scene of Man;
A mighty Maze! but not without a plan;
A Wild, where weeds and flow'rs promiscuous shoot;
Or Garden, tempting with forbidden fruit.

In the first line awake and leave, in the second ambition and pride, in the fourth to look and to die, in the sixth mighty and not without, in the seventh and eighth Wild and Garden, flow'rs and fruit, possess the same relative positions. That is, the structure is balanced, though not necessarily with any sense of opposition. Such structure makes easily for a two-adjective line, a balancing of qualifiers, as in the beginning of Epistle II:

Know then thyself, presume not God to scan;
The proper study of Mankind is Man.
Plac'd on this isthmus of a middle state,
A Being darkly wise, and rudely great:
With too much knowledge for the Sceptic side,
With too much weakness for the Stoic's pride,
He hangs between; in doubt to act, or rest; ... 

Here plac'd and middle, wise and great, much and much, are varied in their duality by Sceptic and Stoic's, for this sort of shading of expectation was one of Pope's greatest prides. Another variety comes in the use of a series of three to bridge the gap, either tentatively, as, a few lines later, "Sole judge of Truth, in endless Error hurl'd," or triumphantly in "Go, soar with Plato to th'empyreal sphere,/To the first good, first perfect, and first fair."

With this structure of build-up from duality, based both in Pope's cumulating couplet form and in his philosophy of part-in-whole, the adjective throve in a sort of additive manner, rather than by variation in meaning as for Donne or by opposition as for Wyatt. In the Essay
on Man a sorting, classifying, weighing process goes on which needs adjectives of "essential" activity or trait to enforce the orders. "The proper study of Mankind is Man," "Whatever is, is Right," "eternal Order," "the gen'ral frame," "true Self-love and Social are the same," "All partial Evil, Universal Good," are the large standard terms; and the general terms for the passions and abilities and visible qualities of men and animals are placed to support these. Thus, such an unusually descriptive passage as vi in Epistle I, though not often repeated in the essay, is characteristic in its use of detailed qualities for philosophical illustration.

Far as Creation's ample range extends,  
The scale of sensual, mental pow'rs ascends:  
Mark how it mounts, to Man's imperial race,  
From the green myriads in the peopled grass:  
What modes of sight betwixt each wide extreme,  
The mole's dim curtain, and the lynx's beam:  
Of smell, the headlong lioness between,  
And hound sagacious on the tainted green:  
Of hearing, from the life that fills the Flood,  
To that which warbles thro the vernal wood: ...  

And so on. Range and scale of the universe provide the framework, and within this either the general terms such as imperial fill out the main lines of structure, or the finest particularities of which Pope was capable, finer in intention to qualify, at least, than we have seen before, are lined up on either hand in green, peopled, dim, headlong, and sagacious and tainted. These examples again show that Pope pairs and balances his lines and concepts, rather than his actual forms of speech as Wyatt did in his typical false versus true. Where Wyatt set adjective over against adjective, and where Donne juggled them to their ultimate reconciliation, Pope by a very different sense of poetic proprieties varied the form from adjective to noun to phrase within the structure of logic which he established, working less through play on words, more through play on clausal forms. So imperial race is set against peopled grass exactly in structure but obliquely in meaning, and dim and beam which balance in sense and position do not in word form. These are the delicacies of Pope's skill, a kind to which our
minds as well as ears are not attuned, but one which represents an advanced consideration of modifying function; which depends upon the adjective for a good deal more major substance than heretofore, and is called upon to recognize the interchangeability of forms for the sake of variety in stating fairly stable and recurrent concepts of generality and common quality.

The greatest lushness resulting from this attitude and technique appears, of course, in a poem like *Eloisa to Abelard*, where we see the theme of love, controlled with so many restraints and dramas of meaning by Wyatt and Donne, laid out clear on the one level of sense and feeling by Pope, with adjectives laid in thick to establish the whole area.

Line after line my gushing eyes o'erflow
Led thro' a sad variety of woe:
Now warm in love, now with'ring in my bloom,
Lost in a convent's solitary gloom!

Seven adjectives in four lines—gushing, led, sad, warm, with'ring, lost, solitary—accumulate and pile up the single mood. Or the lover is more thoroughly modified:

My fancy form'd thee of angelic kind,
Some emanation of th'all-beauteous Mind.
Those smiling eyes, attemp'ring ev'ry ray,
Shone sweetly lambent with celestial day.

Eight adjectives in four lines ally Abelard with all sorts of universal beauties. Or the scene is described in terms to fit the prevailing mood:

But o'er the twilight groves and dusky caves,
Long-sounding aisles, and intermingled graves,
Black Melancholy sits, and round her throws
A death-like silence, and a dead repose:
Her gloomy presence saddens all the scene,
Shades ev'ry flow'r, and darkens ev'ry green,
Deepens the murmur of the falling floods,
And breathes a browner horror on the woods.

Thirteen adjectives in eight lines, and all are in agreement. The tradition they come from is clearly now not the tradition of Wyatt or of Donne but something of Dryden from Milton from Spenser, a tradi-
tion which in the first centuries of English poetry did not so intrude into many themes of thought as it does in the eighteenth for Pope. Or, finally, a passage which illustrates the strong use of adjective as theme, where the very point of the sentences lies in the adjective, not by variation of meaning in a single one such as Donne might have made, but by variation of the terms themselves, for the richness of many qualities:

For thee the fates, severely kind, ordain
A cool suspense from pleasure and from pain;
Thy life a long dead calm of fix'd repose;
No pulse that riots, and no blood that glows.
Still as the sea, ere winds were taught to blow,
Or moving spirit bade the waters flow;
Soft as the slumbers of a saint forgiv'n,
And mild as op'ning gleams of promis'd heav'n.

Fourteen adjectives in eight lines provide most of the meaning of the passage, since the sheer statement is simple enough in the third line. The whole text is a text of atmosphere. As far as nouns go, Donne might in just such a way have called in sea and heaven for clarification of a situation, but would never have drawn from them this sort of sense quality, of cool, still, soft, and mild. By this very use of soft, then, a term which is one of Pope's major half-dozen, one may in some measure define the nature of his special poetics.

A hundred years later, in a poet of simple men's "real" language, the adjectives of sense flourish so that they have taken over half of the major list. They are now a prime and major portion of poetic vocabulary. Wordsworth's main adjectives are: bright, dark, deep, fair, good, happy, high, little, old; the first two are entirely new to primary emphasis in poetry, deep and happy had not been primary by Pope's time, high and little had had some emphasis, but only fair and good were shared with all poets through Pope, and old with Donne and Pope in particular. So the centuries' continuity of dear-fair-good-great-and-true has been reduced to fair-and-good for Wordsworth, and only these two and old are carried over from the Donne tradition. Yet Wordsworth is, in the 1840's, the leading poet closest by far to the easy common language and conversation tradition
of these older poets whom we have observed. Much as he fought Pope, Wordsworth had Pope's place by the 'forties, the place of collected works, dean of a mass of younger writers, and popularity general and moral rather than "poetic." Yet in these 'forties as represented by his work the adjectives of moral and philosophical standard are fewer, and bright, dark, deep, and high have come to take the burden of significance.  

What this shift clearly means is that the intrusion of soft into Pope's major list was sign of a major tendency in poetic thought toward the outside world, and that the chief substance of poetry had by the nineteenth century come to exist in certain qualites of the outside world. This we know in general as we read the poetry; now here in particular we see the nature of those qualities which were found significant: light and height and their opposites as they are received by the senses and by a slight transference can be felt as mood. All these adjectives of Wordsworth modify mountains, seas, streams, lakes, skies, fields, times of day, and then constantly by association his own spirits. Adjectives which he uses in secondary amount (dear, gentle, pure, sad, silent, soft, sweet, wild) are thoroughly of this same kind, plus the straight adjective of feeling in dear and sad which his major happy also represents. His other major terms are all reduced to this same blend of sense and feeling: fair and good are "happy" terms and "pure" terms, little and old are terms of affection, as some of them had begun to be for Donne and Pope.

Outstanding for this list, then, is its singleness of tone, or its variety of tone over a single theme of vocabulary. The natural world and human feeling are the subject at the point where they blend and can share the same epithets; both are therefore deeply limited, away from their eccentricities and particularities and toward their likenesses. High mountain, high spirit; deep lake, deep soul; dark day, dark

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*In addition to books on Wordsworth's diction in general, for which see the Bibliographies to my earlier studies, I note here three which concern, though briefly, details of diction. Mary E. Burton's *The One Wordsworth* lists that poet's revisions toward such adjectives as far and dim. Theodore Spencer, in "Antaeus; or, Poetic Language and the Actual World," *ELH* (1943), suggests a likeness to Yeats in the use of 'bright' and 'dark' terms "scattered with feeling senselessness," to quote Henry Taylor's nineteenth-century essay. Franklyn Bliss Snyder's "Wordsworth's Favorite Words," *JEGP* (1923), counts on a basis which, I have confessed, I do not understand."
mood; bright nature, bright human nature; fair flower, fair maid; little flower, little maid; happy bird, happy feeling. “And then my heart with pleasure fills,/And dances with the daffodils.” To this blend of nature and emotion we have become so accustomed that to write about it seems simply to run over the names of one’s friends. But we have seen that there was little or nothing of such thought in the poetry of Wyatt and Donne, either in noun or adjective, and that in Pope its first large beginnings loomed as a major distinguishing fact. Such sensory thought is of a special identifiable kind, and it seems to make for a special vocabulary and poetry.

The absence of negative epithets from Pope’s major list is strengthened in significance by the same absence from Wordsworth’s. Whereas Wyatt and Donne had a strong negative force to cope with in bad and cruel, and in dead for both, Pope and Wordsworth are smoothly positive, in standards and qualities. Even of their secondary adjectives few are negative: poor perhaps for Pope, and sad for Wordsworth: even these put up no such unremitting fight as death and evil, but are blended into a social or emotional atmosphere. The major-word lists make Wordsworth’s stand even clearer, for where Wyatt’s, Donne’s, Pope’s all contained death in its various forms (largely as verb for Pope), and Wyatt’s also pain, Wordsworth’s list contributes only the new nouns day and time, stressing the present scene and atmosphere, or the past of recollection, but no future of inevitable change and death. Even this concept of time, then, which lay as negative force behind Wyatt’s standards of human steadfastness, and which worked with some ambiguity as old and new for Donne, has literally been brought into the light of day by Wordsworth and made a word of bond, of setting, of enveloping atmosphere.

It is justly to be expected that the structural function of the adjective differs, too, for Wordsworth. We do not get traits and relationships set off against each other or paradoxically bound by him. The adjective is not an instrument of close discrimination of tensions and differences. Even Pope’s effect of balance without necessary opposition is lessened by Wordsworth because, his methods being less explanatory and his steps of thought less clear-cut, he is less aware of alternatives and dif-
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ferentia at any one time and applies himself to the conveying of total moods more minutely. For him the adjective is a delicate selecting and describing instrument, constantly and cumulatively applied. Where for Donne it once in a while picked out the theme, for Wordsworth it seems the patient and tireless discoverer of theme.

So The Prelude begins with a breeze possessed of a quality and a speaker whose reception of this quality are prime ideas to be unfolded adjectivally. And the quality and reception make an immediate bond of feeling between man and breeze which also is described, at some length and specifically.

Oh there is blessing in this gentle breeze,
A visitant that while it fans my cheek
Doth seem half-conscious of the joy it brings
From the green fields, and from yon azure sky.
Whate’er its mission, the soft breeze can come
To none more grateful than to me; escaped
From the vast city, where I long had pined
A discontented sojourner: now free,
Free as a bird to settle where I will.

Here are twelve adjectives in nine lines, and the lines would say little without them except: To me, escaped from the city where I long had pined, there is blessing in the breeze from fields and sky. Such a reduction could be admitted only by those who consider qualification inessential to logic. More justly, one could make the reduction in terms of adjectives: This soft, gentle breeze seems half-conscious of the joy it brings, from green fields and yon azure sky, to me grateful, escaped from the vast city, long discontented, now free, free as a bird. This semishared mood and care for feeling is what makes up the substance of the lines. Half-conscious and free apply to breeze and bird, give them human qualities; while soft and gentle are the breeze’s own but as felt by Wordsworth, green and azure are words of correspondence of color to mood, and grateful as applied to Wordsworth is directed away from discontented toward the breeze as bearing joy. Thus the adjectives provide a sort of embedding or binding material, a connective force of strength and density, an almost transparent adhesiveness, and when one remembers how literally Wordsworth hated isola-
tions of image, thought, and feeling, one understands the force of this solution.

For I, methought, while the sweet breath of heaven
Was blowing on my body, felt within
A correspondent breeze, that gently moved
With quickening virtue, but is now become
A tempest, a redundant energy,
Vexing its own creation.

This is descriptive-essay style of thought, in subject demanding basis in a world of rural nature plus the inner world of a man, and this combination fits very exactly the character of Wordsworth's nine major adjectives of quality and mood. Dark and bright, high and deep, contrasting mood as they do phenomena, nevertheless provide no basic conflict as did Wyatt's dear and cruel, false and true, because they set up no standards of judgment, but shift and blend as moods shift and blend and alter even in every twenty-four hours of Wordsworth's time and day.

The shift and blend of mood which is the subject of The Prelude develops, too, in much more complexity, requiring an adjectival vocabulary of minute shades and states far more varied than Pope's larger essay themes induced.

Humility and modest awe, themselves
Betray me, serving often for a cloak
To a more subtle selfishness; that now
Locks every function up in blank reserve,
Now dupes me, trusting to an anxious eye
That with intrusive restlessness beats off
Simplicity and self-presented truth.

Again, in this more abstract phase of the descriptive-essay style, one sees the constant functioning of modification, the step-by-step refining of terms. Awe is modest, selfishness is subtle, reserve is blank, eye is anxious, restlessness is intrusive, truth is self-presented; no one of these terms startles by radical alteration of the nature of its noun, yet none merely repeats, either, the sense of its noun; each makes the phase of the noun special enough to be specific part of the specific complex of mood which is here being defined.

9 With reference to Ossian in the "Essay Supplementary."
The Prelude moves constantly in this fashion. Average adjective frequency is one to a line, ten in ten lines, and there are no long passages of scarcity, so that enforcement by adjective meaning is constantly maintained. Wordsworth’s use is thus like Pope’s, almost half again more than Donne’s and Wyatt’s; and, like Pope’s, in the long, regular, iambic line the adjectives often move two and two, or pile up in a climactic series: “Till all was tranquil as a dreamless sleep,” or “To firm devotion, zeal unquenchable,/And Christian meekness hal-lowing faithful loves,” or “A huge peak, black and huge,” or “Proud and exulting like an untired horse,” or “scenes so bright,/So beautiful, so majestic.” More characteristically, Wordsworth’s was a combination of long, Latin, conceptual adjectives with brief sense ones, a ripple of distinction and an emphasis which put almost the whole weight upon the adjective forms, as in the passage,

I heard among the solitary hills
Low breathings coming after me, and sounds
Of undistinguishable motion, steps
Almost as silent as the turf they trod.

Solitary, low, undistinguishable, and silent are themselves kinds of qualities characteristic of Wordsworth’s interest, and I imagine that even in isolation they could be placed as his; but furthermore, their own placing here is characteristic of him, the—as in undistinguish-able—increasingly stressed and breathless refinement of the simple idea of breathings and sounds of motion heard in the hills.

Not merely the discursiveness of a descriptive and philosophical iambic pentameter allows for these emphases. Pope carried them into his love letter, and Wordsworth does also into his lyrics and ballads. In the miscellaneous poems of the year 1804 for example, in the decade when Wordsworth was doing what is usually considered his best work, the adjectives are almost as many as in The Prelude and the philosophical poems and are treated with the same distinctions.

O blithe New-comer! I have heard,
I hear thee and rejoice.
O Cuckoo! shall I call thee Bird,
Or but a wandering Voice? ...
Thrice welcome, darling of the Spring!
Even yet thou art to me
No bird, but an invisible thing,
A voice, a mystery; ... 

This is the Cuckoo of which Wordsworth speaks, and this the Phantom of Delight:
A perfect Woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort, and command;
And yet a Spirit still, and bright
With something of angelic light.

And these the daffodils:
Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

And this, Wordsworth's ballad method in "The Seven Sisters":
Away the seven fair Campbells fly,
And, over hill and hollow,
With menace proud, and insult loud,
The youthful Rovers follow.

And this, from Wordsworth's favorite sort of poem, the narrative of the unhappy mother, "The Desertion of Margaret":
Perhaps some dungeon hears thee groan,
Maimed, mangled by inhuman men;
Or thou upon a desert thrown
Inheritest the lion's den;
Or hast been summoned to the deep,
Thou, and all thy mates, to keep
An incommunicable sleep.

In all these—from definition by adjective as in the first, not bird, but wandering and invisible; and combination in the second, a perfect Woman, yet bright with angelic light; to sympathetic description in the third; standard epithet, but lots of it, in the fourth; and the whole impact of feeling and situation in the incommunicable of the last,—Wordsworth extends his span of adjective method. His adjectives
establish types, as Pope’s do; also, and less tentatively than Pope’s, they search out refinements of type to convey special situations of feeling, and this they do not only in the philosophical poems but in the lyrics and narratives as well. So Wordsworth troubled himself all day searching for an epithet for the cuckoo, as his sister has told us, and the epithets were not only to name the cuckoo’s quality in general, but to catch its quality of feeling for Wordsworth himself: “Even yet thou art to me/No bird, but an invisible thing,...” And of person to person: “Thou and all thy mates, to keep/An incommunicable sleep.” It is to be noted how often for Wordsworth these special qualities of feeling were almost unnameable, so that he resorts again to his peculiar use of the negative, not to oppose, but to touch the edge of imperceptibility and inarticulation, as in his many silent and dim and undertone words and as exemplified here by the fine negative epithets invisible and incommunicable.

So much for his general and special usages as they may be seen in some of the lyrics and The Prelude. Their structural function is seen to be a rarification of Pope’s and quite unlike Wyatt’s and Donne’s. The one-per-line frequency and the common two-per-line form of epithet and again epithet, the statement which makes the adjective either necessary adjunct or actually thematic, the lists in climactic emphasis, are shared by Wordsworth and Pope and not by the others, and Wordsworth, within this sharing, constantly searches out discriminations in quality of personal feeling which Pope had more tentatively begun. As against this bond, we have seen the great change in adjectives between the two, and now we see this also is caused by Wordsworth’s refining of terms, his increase of Pope’s soft sort of vocabulary into varieties of dark and deep, and his turning further from standards to qualities as Pope had begun, and his particularizing of general human feelings into more complex individual ones.

Most of the adjectives from The Prelude I and the 1804 lyrics, in contrast to those from the Essay on Man and Eloisa, make both this bond and its refinement even clearer. In proportion of limiting and verbal adjectives to descriptive, Wordsworth has moved away from the Wyatt-Pope norm of 20–20–60 per cent to 10–25–65 per cent; in
other words, he has decreased the numericals, the ones, alls, everys, by half (as Donne, on the other hand, increased them), for the sake of added active and descriptive adjectives. I take it that a high proportion of numericals is a sign of a conversational poetic style and a ratiocinating one: in such a style the relation of one to all, of some to every, of part to whole is important thematically, and, even more, such words are small, common, and unobtrusive and fit as constant fillers into the language of speech and argument. In such fashion, Wyatt and Pope and especially Donne made their emphasis. The scanting by Wordsworth of such filler is as accurate evidence as we need, if the sound of the poems is not enough, for the fact that his prescription of “language of real men” for poetry was evaluative and not descriptive, that he never meant to poetize the structures of talk (especially conversation which might involve two sides), but rather to poetize the structure and content of any statement which seemed to him true and therefore real.

Consequent to this middle ground of his, his numerical terms when he does use them are more often some and many than one or all. His verbal adjectives, like Pope’s, portray an active nature, flying hours, straggling sounds, fluttering and dancing flowers. Even the past participles give this effect, in interfused, polished, measured motion, longed for, beloved son, adorned; many more of these apply to the outer world than to the person involved, so that we seldom get the essential trembling and troubled figure of Wyatt; the motions of the outer world now help convey the motions of the inner.

Wordsworth’s main list of qualifying terms is again more like Pope’s than like the others’, except that his negative terms are only half as many as Donne’s or Pope’s, a scantness which the positivity of his major adjectives has already suggested. The negatives which he does use are not such strong applications to outward forces as bad, cruel, false, dreadful, vile, wrong, and so on; but rather terms of inner fault, closest to Pope’s emphasis on weak, and tending to such terms as weary, anxious, feeble, mean, doubtful, sad, and the un-prefix adjectives of perception and expression—a negative temper entirely different from that of the seventeenth century, which felt evil to be
power rather than inadequacy. A large number of Wordsworth’s qualifying terms, like Pope’s about a fourth, are, as one would expect, sense terms; and it is interesting to note how the two poets differ in selection. Wordsworth preserves the -y adjectives, shady, stately, heavy, airy, lofty, sandy, flowery, frosty, slippery, craggy, rocky, icy, glassy, shadowy, noisy, sunny, fleecy, gusty, lowly, sooty, dusky, milky, spreightly, stormy, leafy, silvery, grassy, and seems in fact to use a good many more of them than Pope. The colors they use are about the same: silver, golden, brown, black, white, with a little rose or yellow or green or blue. The soft, clear, bright, dark, deep, dim adjective they share. The main difference is that Wordsworth’s sense terms have been a little more abstracted from feeling, or the feelings are not quite so heavily congested. We saw in the *Eloisa* how every scene was loaded with mood: darksome, rugged, lambent, hollow, dusky, cool, roseate, all play on the surface of sensation more heavily than Wordsworth’s typical brisk, airy, mellow, sandy, clear, loud, fresh, steep, silent, stiff, sunny. This is not to say that some of these terms were not used by both poets, but simply to give a selection from each full list which will suggest the spirit differing between them. It is probable that the very differing feelings of which the two wrote tended to demand different objects and traits of sense for expression. At least it can be said that Pope’s impinged more heavily, with less lightness of -y’s and less general pleasantness, in spite of his frequent successes at delicate description. Neither poet, heavy or light, used the few major terms over and over as Donne had, but rather seemed to seek the widest variety of adjectives possible to convey any situation. To speak poetically for them was to speak variously of the qualities shared by objects and feelings.

In a further characteristic Wordsworth differed from Pope as well as the rest. We have seen that a large number of Pope’s adjectives, in addition to those of emotion and of sense, applied to his own special sort of universal standards: common, proper, human, general, eternal, and so on. Wordsworth uses many of these, but makes constant considerations in such terms as: correspondent, redundant, congenial, harmonious, present, internal, arduous, naked, needful, grateful, mod-
est, vacant, immortal, calm, inscrutable, obscure, conscious, subtle, kindred, visionary, transient, solitary, inward, which in combination suggest an emphasis upon a meditative terminology rather than a colloquial or dramatic one, and a terminology concerned with a very abstract, impersonal relationship of individual man to universe. Wyatt’s and Donne’s problems were personal in treatment, Pope’s were socially shared; Wordsworth’s in the light of this special terminology of his were thoroughly inward. At best for him there was inward harmony, congeniality, and correspondence with the great natural spirit which revealed itself in daily walks through fields and hills and glades; at worst there was blankness, obscurity, vacantness. The good man was sensitive, conscious, modest, visionary.

As a whole, Wordsworth’s use of modification seems to be founded on two major principles of poetry and reality: one, universal harmony; the other, inward receptivity and sensitivity. The first makes for many of the uses we have seen: the positive nature of all the major terms, the relatively small use of negative terms throughout, and the lack of balances and oppositions; also, the accumulation of varieties of quality in a situation unified by the terms which convey outer traits and inner responses together. The inward sensitivity makes for the special discriminations, of time, of impression, of shades in attitude to the point of troubled inarticulation, the progressive analytic probing by adjectives, the lack of conversational tone and usage, for the sake of statement further refined.

Most of these traits Wordsworth shared at least slightly with Pope, for Pope had made tentative starts in these directions, but few with Wyatt or Donne of the centuries preceding. Between poets of the same relative cast, then, time provides a strong varying force; the change from poet to poet is one not of mere variety, but of orderly motion in time. Looking back at the main-adjective lists as summary device, we see this one-way progression. Wyatt’s cruel, dead, dear, fair, good, great, just, sure, true are followed a century later by Donne’s bad, dead, fair, good, great, last, new, old, true, and again in a century by Pope’s fair, good, great, new, old, soft, and again in a century by Wordsworth’s bright, dark, deep, fair, good, happy, high, little, old. In the
light of the texts we have observed, and often indeed merely on the face of the terms, the drift is apparent, from terms of standards in personal relationship to terms for qualities of sense impression and feeling, or nature relationship. The terms seek a greater compass, inner and outer, and thus achieve also a greater diffusion. Wyatt shares five major terms with Donne, three with Pope, and two with Wordsworth. Donne shares five with Pope, and three with Wordsworth. Pope shares three with Wordsworth, plus a new type in soft. There is no turning back in alliances. The context of major nouns and of secondary adjectives serves to stress even further the gradual steady increase of terms of time, and common, and sense and mood discriminations, and the decrease of conflict and death and the standards of truth and greatness.

Lest it be thought that such progression in poetic material is characteristic only of the four poets here examined, in spite of their usually accepted representative nature in their own times, one may look further at the history of major adjectives from 1540 through 1840 in all the poets for whom concordances are available. The basic list through Donne’s time, even starting with Chaucer, is the same list which Donne and Wyatt shared: the now familiar dead, dear, fair, good, great. Chaucer, Spenser, Marlowe, Wyatt, Shakespeare, and Donne agreed on these (see table 1). Wyatt further shared true with Marlowe and Shakespeare as well as Donne, and Donne shared old with Chaucer and Shakespeare. There was, then, clearly a century and more of major stable poetic material and vocabulary, and Donne’s new was new indeed when he came to it. We do, however, see in the main lists of Chaucer and Spenser one or two other terms, foreign to Wyatt and Donne, which may point the way to the change which took place after Donne’s time; namely, Chaucer’s high and little, Spenser’s high and sad and sweet, and in addition Marlowe’s and Shakespeare’s poor and sweet. In these we see a strain of interest in quality and feeling more “Romantic,” more like Pope and Wordsworth than like Wyatt and Donne, so that we may have here a clue to some of the directing influences of the change which shows so much more strongly by Wordsworth’s time, or at least in Wordsworth’s list. The same influ-
ences are at work in the century between Donne and Pope. The main adjectives of Herrick, Herbert, and Milton continue the more qualitative high, poor, and sweet, at the expense of the old standard dead and true, so that Pope’s major soft seems a little less of a novel emphasis. We see, then, how the force of adjectives of quality which showed in Pope and prevailed in Wordsworth had its gradual beginnings in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, notably, as we might guess, in the tradition of Spenser and Milton. A poet of the eighteenth century who exactly represents the balance to which the forces of quality and standard had finally come is Goldsmith. Contributing no new major term of his own, he divides his allegiances exactly between the Elizabethan agreement on dear, fair, good, great, and the more scattered but increasing affectionate attitudes of little, old, poor, and sweet. All around the equable Goldsmith, the terms were shifting, however, so that by Wordsworth the balance was gone. New major terms were appearing through the eighteenth century: Collins’ deep and green and wild, Gray’s golden, Burns’ bonnie, honest, wild, Cowper’s free and happy, Gray and Coleridge’s deep. Some of these, then, preceded Wordsworth’s major uses. Meanwhile the older qualities were being maintained: Spenser’s gentle, sad, and sweet by Collins; sweet by Burns, Cowper, and Coleridge; fair by all, and good by most; Pope’s soft by his loyal successors Collins and Gray. The great terms to be abandoned in all this new eighteenth-century activity, and increase in quantity as well as quality, were, as we have already seen from the change in four representatives, the words of pain and death, cruel, last, bad, and dead itself; and the words of personal standard, true, great, just, and sure, even now often dear.

In this summary, ignoring the factors of idiosyncrasy on the one hand and of major continuity on the other, I have emphasized the main shifts from century to century in these adjective emphases in order to reinforce the point that a poet’s major vocabulary is bound closely to that of his contemporaries, and does not tend to reach out over wide periods for its agreements. It is for this reason that it is possible to take Wyatt, Donne, Pope, Wordsworth as representative of their times, and to assume that periods will maintain large sections
of agreement. This is one formulable and demonstrable hypothesis, therefore: that a section of time provides a strong homogeneity of poetic material. A second: that the line of change in poetic material, as represented by major English poetic adjectives, moves largely in one direction over a long period.
III. FOUR POETS OF DESCRIPTION: SPENSER, MILTON, COLLINS, KEATS

The fact that the greatest single change shown in representative lists of major adjectives is the shift from standards to qualities suggests a further examination of this one change. Given the hint in frequencies, and following our own general knowledge of poetic contents, we think immediately of Spenser and Milton as the great adjectival poets whose influence may have urged the shift. The work of both these poets began in and after the forties of their respective centuries, rather than culminating in the forties as did the work of the other four representative poets. When it is remembered, too, that Collins, and Tennyson with his Pre-Raphaelites, began work of strong adjectival stress in the forties of the next two centuries, we glimpse a sort of pairing of colloquial with adjectival poets at the same period in each century which looks accidental enough but which at least provides a neat basis for study here. Having examined four poets representing four centuries ending in the forties, and having discovered the greatest alteration to be toward terms of sense quality, we may now apply ourselves to the history of this single alteration by examining poets beginning in the forties and generally accepted as poets of a cast toward adjectival sense description. We begin with Spenser, so noted for such vocabulary that in the nineteenth century when it had come to power he was known as the poets' poet.

It will be remembered that Wyatt's cruel, dead, and dear had been supplanted by Wordsworth's bright, dark, deep; that on fair and good they agreed; but that Wyatt’s great, just, sure, true had become Wordsworth’s happy, high, little, old, a more sense-quality lot all along. Now Spenser’s list of major adjectives, compiled from work beginning about 1577 and ending twenty years later and including sonnets close to Wyatt’s pattern as well as philosophical poems closer to Wordsworth’s, shares major adjectives of both. Confirming our hypothesis concerning a period’s homogeneity, Spenser is closer in agreement with Wyatt, sharing five adjectives, to three with Wordsworth. The familiar combination of dead, dear, fair, good, great pro-
vides the Elizabethan bond, and of these Wordsworth has kept only two. But confirming the second hypothesis, that a trend is to be traced in a slow line of progression, Spenser's remaining four major adjectives reveal the early presence of emphasis on the sensory, though faintly and mixed with feeling: gentle, high, sad, sweet. Here is the current of poetic interest which had not come to the surface for Wyatt or Donne in this time, nor for others, Chaucer, Marlowe, Shakespeare, in such degree. Sweet, indeed, Marlowe and Shakespeare stressed, as some poets in every age were to do; and Chaucer emphasized high earlier, as Wordsworth was to do in company with Coleridge and Keats, Emerson and Housman, later. But no sixteenth-century poet of our record combined so many of these half-feeling, half-sensory terms, and no one till the faithful Collins made gentle or sad a major word again. And, as a point in the negative, none in his time but Spenser omitted true from the major list. It may be said of his poetic emphasis as a whole, then, that it was "Elizabethan" in agreement; but that its differences from the Elizabethan, its subordination of true and its interest in high, sad, and gentle, point toward the stage at which we find Wordsworth arrived, to his high identically and his deep and happy at least as kinds.

Of Wordsworth's secondary adjectives, close in amount to the primary, dear, gentle, and sweet are Spenserian; and of Spenser's, bright, deep, happy, little are Wordsworthian. The terms have, clearly, a kind of realm in common, a realm of qualities mixed with emotions in a tone of affection. Spenser's high modifies heaven, the visible world; or disdain and thought, the inner world; or degree, the standard. Wordsworth's high tends to avoid the last, except in terms like repute, and shares in triumph and aim and intent the inner world, and adds many more outer woods and cliffs. Spenser's fair and good modify feelings and estates and shepherds, nymphs, blossoms, beauties, and plumes; Wordsworth's modify many more various words for the feelings, less of station, and again shepherds, ladies, pilgrims, visions, as well as scenes, lawns, and rivers. Spenser's other terms of standards modify proper nouns, knights, queens, muses, companions, marvels, musics, moods; and Wordsworth's differing terms of quality modify
wave, flower, plain, bliss, silence, child, gleam, sea, song, stone, and cottage, as well as the proper names (less courtly!) and the moods of Spenser. Against their pastoral world of good and feeling, their differences stand out in context as in adjective choice: Spenser makes his distinctions in rank, degree, status, standards; Wordsworth, though he seems to love to use some of this same world, makes his wider discriminations in details of scenes and feelings; he has got much closer down to the surfaces of sense. Even into the lists of major words Spenser's knight survives, whereas Wordsworth's differing terms are of heart and thought, day and time discriminations. Spenser, then, works in a narrower, more closely classified area of major Elizabethan terms, while Wordsworth's contexts spread wide over small flowers and fine sensations, yet in his gentle and his sad and his high, his shepherds and his moods, Spenser glanced toward that realm which Wordsworth would so much more literally explore.

The narrative style of The Faerie Queene moves, as Pope's and Wordsworth's moves, from adjective to adjective in line to line, with a describing epithet for most of the nouns, and an effect of smoothly filled space.

A gentle knight was pricking on the plaine,
Ycladd in mightie armes and silver shielde,
Wherein old dints of deepe woundes did remaine,
The cruell markes of many a bloody fielde;
Yet armes till that time did he never wield:
His angry steede did chide his foaming bitt,
As much disdayning to the curb to yield:
Full jolly knight he seemd, and faire did sitt,
As one for knightly giusts and fierce encounters fitt.

Here are sixteen adjectives in nine lines, and all fill out the meaning by specifying it. The simple content of young knight and restive steed is here in the nouns and verbs alone, but gentle, ycladd, mightie, silver, old, deep, cruell, and so on serve to establish some of the picture, the feeling, and the involved standards of gentleness and knightliness, thus placing the fairly familiar situation with especial care. One does not say, in Spenser's narrative, "giusts and encounters"; one says, "knightly giusts and fierce encounters": this is the way both mind
and meter work. The adjective frequency in Canto I is thus twelve to every ten lines, greater even than Pope's and almost twice Wyatt's.

The sonnets, with the same frequency, sound more like Surrey's than Wyatt's. We have noted how Surrey seemed to smooth the sonnet form by letting one or two adjectives carry the distributed stress of the line and by extending the meaning of the noun by the adjective. Spenser in the Amoretti does the same. In the first sonnet, hands, bands, captives, leaves, lines, and rhymes, the nouns which carry the clear parallels of connections through, all are modified in terms of feeling and quality.

Happy ye leaves! when as those lilly hands,
Which hold my life in their dead doing might,
Shall handle you, and hold in loves soft bands,
Lyke captives trembling at the victors sight.
And happy lines! on which, with starry light,
Those lamping eyes will deigne sometimes to look,
And reade the sorrowes of my dying spright,
Written with teares in harts close bleeding book.
And happy rymes! bath'd in the sacred brooke
Of Helicon, whence she derived is,
When ye behold that angels blessed looke,
My soules long lacked food, my heavens blis.
Leaves, lines, and rymes, seeke her to please alone,
Whom if ye please, I care for other none.

The seventeen adjectives in fourteen lines are step by step distributed, commonly each to one of two nouns which balance the line accent, as in happy ... lilly, happy ... starry, happy ... sacred; or, in a two-line parallel, dying ... bleeding, blessed ... lacked. It is part of the point of the last two lines that the nouns come clear of this close texture to summarize. We see, then, that Spenser early worked in that linear progressive structure with constant adjective support which Pope and Wordsworth employed so thoroughly. Wyatt and Donne avoided its regularity.

In addition to emphatic quantity, the thematic value of the adjective was important for Spenser as only seldom for Donne. The first lines of the Amoretti sonnets show how Spenser sets up the theme in the modifier, that is, the theme of feeling and attitude, if not the intel-
lectual point of relationship which the final lines assert. Some of the first sonnets begin: "Unquiet thought, whom at the first I bred," "The soverayne beauty which I doo admyre," "Be nought dismayed that her unmoved mind," "Fayre eyes, the myrour of my mazed hart," "More then most faire, full of the living fire," "Unrighteous Lord of Love, what law is this," all of which are in contrast to such rarer beginnings as "Daily when I do seeke and sew for peace."

The active metaphoric quality of Donne and even Wyatt is here slowed down by inweaving. The usual Elizabethan captive bonds and bleeding book of the first sonnet do not provide a basic structure, but rather the same sort of additional description that the adjectives provide. The measuring of false and true, dear and cruel in all degrees provides less activity for the sonnet than does discrimination of the magnitudes or the feelings of the battle, of huge, high, or humble, base, black, or fearless. In general it may be said of Spenser that, while he shared half his major terms with Wyatt, he almost doubled the use of such terms and turned them to descriptive rather than relational effect even in the sonnet form which both shared. The amplificatory descriptive interest of the rhetoricians is strong in him, as Rosemund Tuve has thoroughly shown.¹

The thousand lines from The Faerie Queene and the Amoretti bear out the point. Spenser in these lines uses fewer adjectives of amount and relation and more descriptive ones than any other poet of our observation. Along with Wyatt and Donne he uses fewest participial adjectives, and these are strongly descriptive: hurling, kindling, clad, led, hidden, adorned. About one in seven of the qualifying adjectives is a sense term, much stronger than Wyatt's and Donne's but not so strong as Wordsworth's. His negative adjectives of horror and gloom are much like Pope's in content and amount, though not so various. Altogether his adjectives are nearest to Pope's in the ardor of their epitheting, their deep, bloody, shady, hollow, darksome, filthie, black,

¹ Veré Rubel, op. cit., p. 241, says "the adjectives in The Faerie Queene are a study in themselves." They are outstanding and elaborate, adopting from the poetry of Tottel's Miscellany, especially its adjective forms in -y and in participle, with a steady increase of transferred epithets. Sharp, op. cit., stresses Spenser's sensuousness, in the midst of what Rosemund Tuve, "Imagery and Logic," Journal of the History of Ideas (1942), calls a conceptual rather than a perceptual use of imagery.
silver, fyry, bright, baleful, soft, fresh, in their varieties of -y endings (at least twenty in a thousand lines), and their suiting of scene to emotion. They make few fine discriminations. Their strongest individual content is the vocabulary of court standard, gentle, pure, royal, worthy, uncouth, piteous, wanton, lofty, little, dear, the tender terms of a created world.

Spenser was thus a strongly Elizabethan poet in adjective terms, both as he shared more than half his major adjectives with his contemporaries and as his contexts for these adjectives were the courtly and tonal contexts of his time. But the rest of his major adjectives and many of his secondary ones point directly out of his period in the direction which Wordsworth represents for us, the direction of sense-emotion emphasis in terms. His gentle and sad go forth to Collins, his sweet to many poets, his high to Milton and then to Wordsworth. His secondary cruel and false and foul and noble represent his contemporaries, his secondary bright, deep, full, happy, little, low, wide go forward in his own school and line, into the poetry of description, of Herrick, Collins, Wordsworth, and Keats.

This line Milton advanced. His position in respect to major adjectives seems a transitional one. Giving up some Elizabethan terms, he continues the seventeenth-century primacy of negatives with Donne's bad. He shares, too, the sweet of his time, and the continuing fair, good, and great, and adds to Spenser's high his own happy, a combination to come into effect again with Wordsworth. He uses a great mass of secondary adjectives, all a little less than a hundred times, as his major terms exceed a hundred, and some of these, like Spenser's, are standards, divine, just, pure, but most are physically descriptive: bright, dark, deep, wide, new, and old. These last two, again, he shared particularly with Donne, as with Herbert and Pope, marking a century of such interest. In Milton's terms as in Spenser's, then, we see characteristics of his own century, in some Elizabethan bonds and some with Donne, and also a new contribution in a developing line, the high and happy line.

In noun context, too, this is the contribution which Milton makes. Most of his words are the great life and death, God and man words,
but to good he adds high as major, and to heaven, earth. These are the particularizations he makes instead of Spenser’s knight, or Marlowe’s lord, or Donne’s soul and thought, or Herbert’s heart and sin. For the great Puritan the big new words of justification are words of sense more than of standard, of theme and tone literally high.

Praise, pitch, supremacy, will are high; sufferance and disdain are high; road, temple, seat, and woods are high. State and life and days are happy; realms and fields, walks, seat, and house are happy. Here then is the very combination of scene and feeling which we note also in Spenser, Pope, and Wordsworth. Feelings as well as hills are high; hills as well as feelings are happy; in this special realm of descriptive-ness the terms are interchangeable. In the contexts of others among Milton’s main epithets a more Miltonic note is to be heard. There are bad angels, influence, deeds, declension; fair creatures, consort, light, woman, image, fruit, and guerdon; good reasons, counsel, covenant; great argument, Creator, furnace, sea; sweet voices, joys, groves, graces, and societies. The phases of Milton’s spirit may be remarked in these, the judicial, astronomical, august, and sensuous aspects of his interest. There is a blend of Donne’s geometric business and Spenser’s scenic temper in this “sensuous” and “passionate.” What shows least at this level is all the vocabulary of dogma and the learned lore by which I at least, and I think many moderns, think of Milton. The Romantics did not so. They more centrally saw in him and took from him terms and phrases at the high level of his primary and secondary adjectives of sense and passion.

Most of the adjectives in the early poems extend this emphasis in the major terms. I select the early poems not only because I have done so all along as a simple way of beginning, and because of the variety provided by them, but also because they were most absorbedly read by Milton’s poetic followers in the next two centuries. They all stress adjectives, in the proportion of twelve to every ten lines, a rate equal to Spenser’s and higher than any other we have observed. Like Spenser’s, too, their proportion of quantity epithets is lower, and of participial higher than Wyatt’s or Donne’s or Pope’s; they are not poems of talk and quantitative filler; rather, their proportion is like Collins’,
with even more modifying participles than Spenser had. The present participles are active and vivid, in sliding, turning, bending, burning, thrilling, brooding, slumbering, whispering; the past participles are highly devoted to visible states and thus to display, as in arched, fetter’d, dight, heart, regained, starr’d, wreath’d. For Milton they make a strong contribution to poetic technique.

Of the rest of his adjectives, the great variety of sense terms is most important. We have seen that for Wyatt and Donne the major adjectives were a large proportion, about a fifth of the total; and the variety of the rest was not great, especially among terms of sense. In Pope and Wordsworth, on the other hand, as we have later seen in Spenser too, the major terms do not loom large—are less than a tenth; and two most outstanding facts are the number and variety of secondary terms of sense. So too for Milton. Here are darksome, bright, sweet, wild, gaudy, naked, green, white, deep, shady, airy, dark, oozy, crystal, silver, leprous, radiant, bitter, red, scaly, hollow, chill, dim, black, ragged, blue, dull, amber, russet, barren, trim, shallow, savoury, spicy, nut-brown, aerial, salt, sapphire, thick, rosy, finny, pert, and so on for many more.

These sound much like Spenser’s except that they are more colorful.¹ Compare the -y adjectives of the two: Spenser’s shady, bloody, filthy, dirty, weedy, ruddy, hoary, lowly, griesly, lilly, starry, lusty, lofty, drossy, fyry, shiny, cloudy, with Milton’s shady, gaudy, airy, oozy, scaly, savoury, spicy, shadowy, hairy, woody, fleecy, drowsy, lowly, flowry, massy, mossy, lofty, watry, sultry, gory, flashy, dusky, rosy, starry, finny, tawny, cloudy. The two share only a few; Milton uses more; and Milton tends to make his from objects rather than from qualities, so that the effect is one of greater concreteness. This comparison holds for other types of quality adjectives too: Milton’s style is thicker with object sense.

Note then Pope’s giddy, fiery, flow’ry, watry, balmy, mazy, bloody, spiry, dusky, gloomy, dreary; and Collins’ balmy, sultry, dusty, flow’ry, wat’ry, shady, breezy, fleecy, spicy, dewy, shadowy, ridgy, thmy,

¹ The discussions of Miltonic diction and style by Tillotson, Tillyard, and Raymond D. Havens seem most useful at this point. See Bibliography. All stress, as is conventional, his eighteenth-century followers, and all touch on some minute details of vocabulary.
wavy, sunny, pearly, hoary, gleamy, cloudy, paly, beamy, viny; and finally Wordsworth's heavy, shady, airy, lofty, sandy, flowery, frosty, slippery, rocky, craggy, icy, glassy, noisy, sunny, fleecy, gusty, lowly, sooty, rocky, giddy, milky, sprightly, leafy, silvery, grassy. The Spenser and the Milton tradition clearly come together for all these poets, both in quantity and kind, and also in method. The poets create these -y words progressively; they do not simply borrow them from one another. And more and more nouns come to participate in the discrimination of qualities.

Thus we see Milton's central place in this sort of usage, this strong visual emphasis. For Spenser and Milton, sense terms amount to a seventh or sixth of all general epithets; Pope weakens to a tenth, but holds; he is far ahead of Wyatt and Donne; Collins rises to a fourth, Wordsworth and Tennyson to a fifth: this is a lot of descriptive language for poetry. It comes at the expense of the strongly repeated major language we have noted, or of the strong negative emphasis of Donne.

Negatives for Milton, as for most except Donne, maintain a fairly stable position and variety. Spenser, Milton, and Pope all like the horrid, infernal, hideous, baleful, rank, foul sort of atmospheric term. All maintain some of the false, evil, cruel, vain sort, which is more characteristic of most Elizabethans. Thus the course of evil too was from relationship into atmosphere, or into the relation with scenes in nature—scenes which, through Pope, were to get danker and danker.

Many of the rest of Milton's epithets are magnitude or moral terms as one might expect: sovran, humble, universal, aweful, celestial, prophetic, sacred, gorgeous, monumental, massy, monstrous, bounteous, are examples of the first kind; and felonious, virtuous, divine, perfect, innocent, sinful, of the second. And there are multitudes of emotions. Milton has moved away from the particularities of Spenser's courtly pastoral world toward that large and moral emotional universe of Pope, even in the simple early poems, in the Nativity, L'Allegro, Il Penseroso, Lycidas, Comus.

The reader's slightest memory of these poems will call up, I think,
that strong and smooth, if judicious, progress from noun to noun which characterizes their adjective structure as it does also that of Spenser and of Pope.

This is the Month, and this the happy morn
Wherein the Son of Heav’n’s eternal King,
Of wedded Maid, and Virgin Mother born,
Our great redemption from above did bring; . . .

Hence loathed Melancholy
Of Cerberus and blackest midnight born,
Of Stygian Cave forlorn
’Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy, . . .

Yet once more, O ye Laurels, and once more
Ye Myrtles brown, with Ivy never sere,
I come to pluck your Berries harsh and crude,
And with forc’d fingers rude,
Shatter your leaves before the mellowing year.

Here are twenty epithets in thirteen lines, measured out often to the half lines, and often following as well as preceding the noun as in *Stygian cave forlorn* and *forc’d fingers rude*. Milton’s constant frequency of twelve adjectives in ten lines is therefore not surprising; his whole lyrical structure, like his epical blank-verse structure, demands the paced, and often the double, epithet.

So before him, Spenser’s; and so after him, Collins’. These were the great architects of the adjective. For these three, even one epithet to a line was not enough, though Pope and Wordsworth, using much the same technique of emphasis, found one sufficient. These three, with Keats later, should, I think, be distinguished as maintainers of a special poetic type throughout the centuries, a type with its special popularity in the eighteenth century but with a longer and stronger persistence too. Collins, at the center of it, makes the epithet flourish structurally in its Spenserian and Miltonic way.

Ye Persian Maids, attend your Poet’s Lays,
And hear how Shepherds pass their golden Days: . . .

In fair Circassia, where to love inclin’d,
Each Swain was blest, for ev’ry Maid was kind! . . .
O Thou, the Friend of Man assign'd,
With balmy Hands his Wounds to bind,
And charm his frantic Woe:
When first Distress with Dagger keen
Broke forth to waste his destin'd Scene,
His wild unsated Foe!...

Farewell, for clearer Ken design'd,
The dim-discover'd Tracts of Mind:
Truths which, from Action's Paths retir'd,
My silent Search in vain requir'd!...

These are the beginnings of first and fourth Eclogues, and the Odes on Pity and Manners, and they distribute modifiers to most of their nouns, at the rate of nineteen in fourteen lines, in the line balance with which we have become familiar. The epithet here is a sort of largesse, but it is also in this poetry a necessity, for neatness of structure demands a smoothness which the insertable adjective can provide, and a sense of universal order requires essential labels in its filing system. The strong use of the past participle is part of this labeling order; in such a world, people and things are naturally inclin'd, design'd, assign'd, destin'd—to quote from the lines above.

Collins, like Milton, uses more of these participial terms than the other poets; 30 per cent, in fact, have this form, an amount twice Donne's. Collins' quantitative *alls, nones, somes* are at a minimum, as are Spenser's and Milton's. And like theirs, in the large array of descriptive epithets, his terms of sense bulk large; they have risen in him to a proportion of a fourth of all, and most of his major terms too are sense terms. In Collins we come to an apparent climax of a development. He uses as many adjectives as any we have seen, more participials than any but Milton, fewer negatives, and by far the most large, rich, and emphatic vocabulary of sense. All these proportions fit together in the one valuation which he implies: that characterization by pleasant, emotional, scenic, sensable epithet is poetic.

His major terms are new; he has strongly broken with the Elizabethan tradition of standards and shares only one term, *fair*, with Donne. *Deep, fair, gentle, green, sad, soft, sweet, wild* are his epithets. Of these, *sweet* is shared with most; *gentle* and *sad* are Spenser's, and
only these two poets stress them; soft comes from Pope and goes on to Gray and Keats; and the rest, green, deep, and wild, are Collins’ own contributions to emphasis, and go on from him to Gray, Burns, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, and Poe. The attitude in sad and gentle is specifically borrowed, then, to fit the new, wild, green, and deep scenic world.

The list of Collins’ main words of every kind bears on this concentration. First, more adjectives appear in his than in other poets’ lists. Second, he contributes more new words than do other poets. Third, his new nouns, maid, youth, eye, hand, and song, fit his pastoral, pictorial, and musical scene. Eye goes on in the emphases of just those poets who continue his new epithet uses too, in Gray, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Keats, Poe; they are men of vision in literal as well as lofty meaning.

It is interesting to note that of the two who are so often paired, Gray was not the innovator, though he was the theorizer. His work was a trifling bit later in years and his life longer in years, and he was, as a poet of the new school, less free. He made no innovations in main terms, but was quick to follow Collins in three; he stressed the older verbs, of dying, giving, knowing, living, which Collins had given up. In adjectives, he used Collins’ deep and fair, and added his own distinguished golden, but seems to have ignored the Spenser tradition in favor of the Pope-Goldsmith more attitudinal line of great, little, old, and soft. A strong difference between the two poets is thus evident in the major words and should be further illuminated by a study other than this, of their poetry as a whole. For while I trace the continuities in the Spenser-Milton-Pre-Romantic tradition, there are glimpses of important distinctions to be made for other purposes. We should look outside of concordances, too, for possible predecessors to Collins, Thomson for example, in his innovations.

At any rate, from the available material, Collins stands out as strong in the Spenserian adjective line, in quantity, structure, kind of reference, and emphasis by innovation. His deep, green, and wild enrich

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*Edward G. Ainsworth, Jr., in Poor Collins: His Life, His Art, and His Influence, relates Collins’ descriptive terms, his outstanding use of such combinations as shady groves for example, to models of Pindar, Spenser, Milton, Pope. In his appended lists of like phrases, and elsewhere
the already rich realm of scenic sense. His modified world differs from Milton's in its smaller scope, from Spenser's in its lack of social frame. It is at once more outward, in its deep Grove, Thunder, Forest, its wild Wing, its fair scenes and Echoes sweet, its green Forests, Hills, Alleys; and more inward in its deep Despair, fair Renown, green Delights, gentle pity, sad Hour, Retreat, Tale, soft Virtue, Voice, Theme, sweet converse and Illusion, wild Sorrow, yell, Despair, Enthusiast Heat. This blend, pageant, and landscape of the feelings is Collins' great preoccupation, as these separate phrases show. His world is far less a social, moral, even astronomical world than Milton's or Spenser's, for he has drawn from them just intensely their scene-emotion contribution and stressed it with insisted artifice. He makes continual reference to the artifice itself in such terms as tale, theme, lay, voice, note, lyre, and to the artificers, gentlest Otway, sweet Racine, and others.

The world of Maid, Sultana, Circassia, shepherds, softest sweetness, the Deep, the Fair and Young, of eye and song and wild unsated Foe, is the narrowed and intensified world of correspondences. Spenser's tender at-a-distance attitudes, Milton's sensuous intensity without his range, Pope's soft and terrible brown world of sorrow in Eloisa come very thickly together in Collins because Collins uses them so exclusively, making them greener and wilder in literal statement and more literally artful.

In large mass, Collins' adjectives show his sense of aesthetic arrangement. His participials, which we have seen to be more than usual, are more actively decorative than Milton's. Crown'd, array'd, design'd, arch'd, loos'd, mingled are played against groaning, alluring, relenting, shrinking; the passions act as in a frame. The sense details within the frame, in the proportion of one in every four epithets, read thus: golden, od'rous, radiant, delicious, fragrant, lustrous, balmy, swift, cold, silken, sultry, dusty, shrill, verdant, silver, brown, flow'ry, gaunt, big, distant, level, wat'ry, cool, shady, breezy, russet, cloudless, faint, fleecy, spicy, blue, hard, lurid, red, bare, pale, dewy, grey, sable, roseate,

In the text, Ainsworth stresses Miltonic influence most strongly, though, as we have seen, in major terms the strongest bond is Spenser's. Ainsworth sets the height of Collins' influence near the 1770's and quotes Wordsworth's praise of his imagery; it seems clear that Collins was, in the sense of bringing to the surface of poetic emphasis his array of modifications, as he wished to be in his motto, "a deviser of diction."
bleak, bright, aerial, chill, sallow, wide, white, mellow, brisk, warm, and so on, a more varied lot both in sense and feeling discriminations than we have seen before, though more in one tone, perhaps, than Milton's. The forms of these, as we have seen in comparison to Milton, are many and flourishing. The negative terms, relatively scant, also differ in being descriptive more of feelings than of scenes; the foul grots have gone, in spite of the well-known ruinous atmosphere of Collins' time, in favor of moods desp'rate, sickly, weak, frantic, sullen, dread, and woful. Again in this narrowing we see Collins' poetical character, his greater consciousness of art as aesthetic pleasure, his specialized use of both scene and feeling in that stationary frame. The moods which move across the colored landscape bring dark shadows, even violent, but mostly gentle and sad, in enjoyable contrast to bright pavilion'd Plains and roseate Bow'r, and the stated wildness of action and motion.

With woful Measures wan Despair
Low sullen Sounds his Grief beguil'd,
A solemn, strange, and mingled Air,
'Twas sad by Fits, by Starts 'twas wild.

But thou, O Hope, with Eyes so fair,
What was thy delightful Measure?
Still it whisper'd promis'd Pleasure,
And bad the lovely Scenes at distance hail!

A century later, in the 1840's, this passion for passion in scene had subsided, and with this subsiding the adjective as controlling form had faded a bit in poetry. Wordsworth, as we have noted, worked at about Pope's level in gross amounts and kinds. He participated with Pope in the mode of Collins which extended between them, but with moderation, using perceptibly fewer adjectives and a milder blend of sense terms. By Wordsworth's death in 1850, the great "new" poet was Tennyson, and Tennyson moderated the descriptive adjective tradition even further, by reducing his number of adjectives further, to eight or nine in ten lines; though he, counter to Wordsworth, maintained the Collins emphasis on sense adjectives and the indifference to negatives. As Spenser followed Wyatt, then, as Milton Donne, as Collins Pope, so Tennyson followed Wordsworth, but not in the same
degree of opposition. He, like the other three, was a poet of the descriptive adjective in particular and with vigor, but in regard to the ever-presence of adjectives in general he had weakened (about 30 per cent, to be exact).

Our great fourth poet of the adjective was not Tennyson, but Keats. We must break the century pattern of chronology, then, for a paragraph or two, to consider the specific nature of this line as, by our hypothesis, Keats climaxed it. The tradition did not quite wait for Tennyson; it subsided just a few decades short of the three-century mark, in the too early death of Adonais.

Keats participated fully in the tradition of magnificence of adjectival quantity, quality, and structure. Like Spenser, Milton, and Collins, he used twelve adjectives to ten lines. Like all but Donne's, at least 60 per cent were descriptive qualifying adjectives. Like Spenser, Milton, Collins, Wordsworth, he used only half as many quantity terms, the terms of natural speech, as did the rest. Like Milton and Collins alone he stressed the past-participial modifier, the describable state. Like Milton and Collins too, and Tennyson, he used among his descriptive terms sheer sense terms in a proportion of a third, six times Wyatt's and Donne's and even three times Spenser's. His use of negative epithets is less than any but Tennyson's. Keats adheres closely, then, to the major-adjective line. Some of his alliances go all the way back to Spenser at the beginning, some are closer to Tennyson at the end, most are closest to Collins at the zenith.

The content of Keats' adjectives is by now very familiar to us. Of the major eleven, fair, good, great, and sweet were major for most others too, all through; high was characteristically Spenserian and Miltonic, and little and old were both Elizabethan and Romantic. Keats was thus somewhat more conventional than Collins. On the other hand, his soft, green, golden stem from the school of Pope, Collins, and Gray, and are the last instances of these three major emphases; and his bright he shares only with men of his own time, Wordsworth, Shelley, Emerson. His main emphasis, then, is both part of a long tradition and part of his own time; in the latter respect it is notable that Wordsworth, Keats, Shelley, and Tennyson tended to make a group
in the sharing of the major words; and that Shelley's distinction was his use of dead again, after a long gap from the Elizabethans, with his deep and dark to accompany it.

The top level of Keats' usage contains more adjectives than usual, and his secondary list is close, containing gentle and happy, deep, silver, white, wide, young. The presence of four colors in the two lists, and the relegation of the emotion terms to the secondary one, together characterize his emphasis, in his whole area of adjective reference, upon sense and especially sight. There is in him less of the named interplay between quality and feeling than in Milton and Collins. His major epithets do modify mood, and cheer, and pain, and passions and delights; but, much more often, music, day, service, luxuries, weather, path, array, abyss, sun, star, moon, roses, faces, lids, wings, stags, lakes, island, hill, turf, berries, doors, noises, flowers, rills, thunder, wine, Thames, Triton, wind, rustle, bloom, and song. Here is a world devoted to sense far more thoroughly than any heretofore; even the world of Collins paraded its abstractions through a scantier sensible realm. All these nouns described by Keats' major adjectives are the naturally accepted furniture of poetry since his time; it is therefore interesting to note how long it took even the strongest adjectival poetry to use this furniture; for Spenser and Milton and even Collins, still, fair, sweet, great, and soft were as often used with abstractions as with things.

The greatest homogeneity, the greatest narrowing and centering of interest, seems to me visible on this upper level of Keats' usage. The stories, personages, judgments fall away, and a soft bright sweet physical world of scene remains. The main term closest to standard, the word good, Keats uses not to judge by, but colloquially: good man, good Knight, good Heavens! good gods! in accepted phrases.

In keeping with such concentration he makes few negative judg-

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4 Two interesting stages in the development of the poetic use and significance of color, moving toward its sheer symbolic force for moderns, are illustrated by Kames and Hulme. Kames in his Elements of Criticism (New York, 1830, p. 347), writing in 1762, said that "blue vault of heaven" was preferable to "sky," not only as more elevated and less common, but also as based on resemblance, an accessory object, "vault" by means of a shared quality producing a shared feeling. T. E. Hulme in his Speculations, 1912 (ed. Herbert Read, 1924, p. 164) said that Keats' "blue above the trees" was preferable to "sky above the trees" because it was a more vivid actuality. Here the need for an "accessory object" has gone and the color itself has become object enough. So with Baudelaire's blue.
ments, uses few evils and cruels. We have not, here, the melancholic epithet variety of Pope's scenery even; only a few: purgatorial, foul, unpious, horrid, sick, loth, and barren. One special kind is characteristic, however, the noting of absence in noiseless, tuneless, voiceless, soundless, regardless, viewless, realmless, careless, peerless, nerveless, senseless, thoughtless, motionless, listless. Such interest in fine negative discrimination we have noted also in Wordsworth.

Most of Keats' participial modifiers are full of this same discrimination and palpitating action, in glowing, breathing, whisp'ring, aching, blazing, and frozen, fled, hush'd, forlorn, heaped, winged, and fallen; these are imbued with a sense of life and motion stronger than the more static decorativeness of the earlier forms. And his extra large portion of sense terms, too, carries a whole variety of life: in bitter, chill, silent, numb, meagre, wan, black, dull, rough, argent, rich, broad, bland, gray, brilliant, purple, close, dim, warm, dusky, silken, pallid, creamy, lucent, lustrous, hollow, blue, dark, cold, starry, faint, rosy, loose, ear, heavy, thin, smooth, shrill, keen, mellow, tall, sharp, fragrant, crystalline, lithe, vast, sable, swart, pearly. This is not a mass of terms new to our view, but a mass more various and full of contrast. So too his \-y terms, of which there are almost twice as many kinds as in any one poet before, are not new creations but simply in fuller combination, such few as woolly, clammy, scummy, creamy being Keats' contribution.

A word should be said about the compound epithets for which Keats is so famous. In the thousand lines of poetry sampled here, he uses about seventy-five such compounds, mostly in the past-participial epithet. Examples of the form are eager-eyed, sole-thoughted, hot-blooded, ivory-headed, half-hidden and others with half, the adverb plus verb form of palsy-twitched, deep-delved, soft-lifted; thus mainly adjectival or adverbial. Spenser and Donne used few of these forms, only a handful. Milton used just half as many as Keats, mostly of the adjective-noun, gray-hooded, pure-eyed variety. Pope used about twenty in the Essay and Eloisa, and some of these, like pale-eyed, he took direct from Milton. Collins used in a thousand lines just as many as Milton and of the

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See David Watson Rannie's 'Keats's Epithets' in Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association, III (1912), and W. A. Massey's The Compound Epithets of Shelley and Keats (Poznán, 1923).
same type, often borrowed directly; Wordsworth used as many as Pope, and Tennyson more than twice as many. The tradition, then, at least within our framework, seems to have been a Miltonic one, with the pattern of continuation close to the pattern we have been observing all through: Collins, Keats, and Tennyson follow with enthusiasm, Keats with most of all, while Wordsworth and Pope agree upon a kind of moderate acceptance. In variety from Milton on, the compounds noticeably broadened, out from the past participle into the present and into adjective-adjective forms like silver-gray. Keats did reach a peak of emphasis, with Tennyson close but second. In effect, his compounding served not only to enrich but also to enliven; his many adverb forms gave motion, though a caught one, to the descriptive past participle; leaf-fring’d, purple-stained, dark-cluster’d all have life as well as decoration in them. So, too, Keats’ continuation of structural pattern is full of vigor by its very concentration.

St. Agnes’ Eve—Ah, bitter chill it was!
The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
The hare limp’d trembling through the frozen grass,
And silent was the flock in woolly fold: . . .

Every adjective at this beginning of the poem bears directly on the theme which all establish; indeed the sense of warmth in cold is a close core of the theme as a whole. The noun by noun, half line by half line order and emphasis of the adjective, familiar as part of the Spenserian tradition, are here most self-centeredly employed. It is not that seven nouns in four lines receive their meaningful attributions, as in Spenser; and not that they are set off each against the other, as in Pope, by essential traits; but rather that they all are made to participate in an atmospheric quality, owl, hare, flock, grass, together. At the beginning of Hyperion indeed there is contrast, for Keats felt in contrast a deep significance, but it is not the matched kind of Pope, and contributes all to one tone.

Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve’s one star,
Sat gray-hair’d Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair.
The adjectives of the Grecian Urn—unravish’d, slow, sylvan, flowery, leaf-fring’d, loth, mad, wild; then heard, sweet, unheard, sweeter, soft, sensual, endear’d, fair, bare, bold, winning, fair; then happy, happy, happy, unwearied, piping, new, happy, happy, happy, warm, panting, young, breathing, human, high-sorrowful, cloy’d, burning, parching; then coming, green, mysterious, lowing, silken, drest, little, sea, mountain-built, peaceful, pious, little, silent, desolate; then Attic, fair, marble, overwrought, forest, trodden, silent, Cold, old, other, all, all—bring in their course and their stanzaic grouping the conflict, rapture, excess, relief, and resolution in suspension which are the poem as any reader reads it, or even as Kenneth Burke reads it.

In Cold Pastoral! too, we have a sign of the great power and position of the adjective for Keats: adjective and exclamation mark go together for him. “Ah, happy chance!” “the whole bloodthirsty race!” “O for some drowsy Morphean amulet!” “how pallid, chill, and drear!” “and sunburnt mirth!” “In such an ecstasy!” “immortal Bird!” “Forlorn!” “more happy, happy love!” “O brightest!”

So close the adjective seems to pure expressive form for Keats that we may justly identify his poetry with it, even more fully than the poetry of Spenser and Milton, and equally with Collins. More adjectives for Keats were sense adjectives, more verbs adjectived and compounded, more adjectives appeared at the highest level of usage, more -y terms were created, more traditional epithets of standard were converted to epithets of sense, more objects of the outer world of landscape were modified by more colors and the other terms of sense, more epithets set the tone and maintained the theme of the poetry, more adjectives struck and held key notes with an exclamation. “A brighter word than bright, a fairer word than fair,” was the unreachable goal of Keats’ poetic spirit, which, while it was unsatisfied with epithet and asked for a more ineffable naming, asked still in the major terms, a brighter and a fairer.

By the proposed pattern of chronology Tennyson should have stood with Spenser, Milton, Collins as the great describing poet of the last half of his century. Because of other preoccupations, especially with

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melody and suggestion, he has given this place to the earlier Keats; he has declined the major emphasis of Keats. From now on, from the 1840's on, I believe, we are to see some decline of adjectival poetry. In Tennyson we see the beginning of this in two shapes, one over-interest, one under-interest, in the adjective patterns. The Lady of Shalott poems use fewer than we have seen since Donne, nine in ten lines (eight in ten later in *Maud*). This is diminution by a fourth or more. But in proportion there are still as many sense terms, almost as many participial modifiers, almost as many of those compound and -y constructions which characterized Keats' epithet-making. On the other hand, again, Tennyson was not very inventive in these matters.

His major terms are conservative. Good, great, fair, little, long, old, sweet, rather desert Collins' tradition and go back to the line of Gray, Goldsmith, Burns, and Wordsworth, as well as Keats, the tradition in which little, old, and sweet go together in affectionate fashion, and in which the main line of fair, good, and great is preserved. *Long* is Tennyson's single, and singular, contribution. He uses it to describe the outer world and some feelings, cloud, ripples, glories, street, years, hills, sighs, wave, breeze, town, valley, torrent, a familiar nineteenth-century poetic world, but appearing after *long* with a special intensity for Tennyson, as in “The long white walk of lilies toward the bower,” and “Far o'er the long backs of the bushless downs,” and “A long, long weeping, not consolable.” It is for him a personal poetic word. The rest of his modified terms are the now usual hills, shadows, isles, ladies, stars, dreams, perhaps not so solid as Keats' but in the same physical world. They show too, as Keats' did, and even more, an added particularity, in such details as mansion, cloudlet, glimmer, elm, banner, and especially after the secondary epithets of golden and white, happy, true, and wild: balustrade, curl, bee, sand, egg, key, peg, barley, gauze, gravel, lizard, shore, chime, bell, surf, lichen, sail, tunic, fog. These minuter object discriminations are important to the course of poetry. They show one reason why the adjective might decline: increasing noun particularity by itself presented things to sight clearly. They show that things follow where qualities lead. In the course of our observation it was a long time before epithets of sense came to modify objects of
sense very strongly. *Fair, sweet,* and *great* grew only gradually sensible in their full contexts.  

There are other signs beside increased object particularity in the Lady of Shalott poems that indicate the narrowing and intensifying of the adjective function. One is the increased particularity of the sense terms themselves, in gray, airy, clear, red, curly, blue, brazen, yellow, gemmy, golden, silver, purple, coal-black, crystal, pale, low, dim, willowy, faint-blue, dusty-white, rosy-bright, iron-like, silver-clear, oblique, misty, dew-dark, warm, green, fiery, glossy, fragrant, and others. Discriminations in shade of color and in degree of intensity are here in order, not merely to note color and texture more than ever, but to note shades in color and texture by means of that very compounding which was earlier used largely to arrest whole visual pictures. The step between garland-crown'd and dusty-white is a longer one philosophically than technically.

A second sign of a shift in adjective function is an increase in present-participial as compared to past-participial forms. Milton, Collins, and Keats as great adjectival poets are also great users of the static and arresting past form to poise the picture. They use it twice as much as the present form. In Tennyson the two are about equal. We have noted how Keats began to enliven the past-participle compound by the use of more adverbs in the compounds; this sense of action and motion as involved in modifying forms developed further in Tennyson's participials, in tower'd, still-lighted, unquenched, touch'd, soften'd, heavenly-

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7 We have in general in modern criticism a curiously negative notion of "Romantic" diction. I suppose that the adjectival stage is one we have just temporarily got over and we therefore particularly scorn it. Certainly the desire to take in more and more of the physical world was a deep and honest one, and certainly the scenic vision was a naturally exploratory one, and certainly the descriptive epithet was as good and useful a device as one could find to express this vision. True, the view was not dramatic or double, as we now like it; it saw rather in basic classes, varieties, and gradations, even by Keats' time. It was, rather, cumulative, as Bateson points out (*English Poetry and the English Language*, p. 116); connotative, as Tate points out (*Reason in Madness*, pp. 71, 76, 83); moving toward "excess in color, movement, and hope," as William Van O'Connor writes in *Climates of Tragedy*, p. 5. It was clear in Pope's time, as Pottle points out, *op. cit.*, p. 43, and it involved the shift from values in manners to values in things. Hobbes had written to Davenant in 1650, "the subject of poetry is not natural science but the manners of men," but by Warton's time the theory was that men were so bad, it was wiser to treat of things (Ainsworth, *op. cit.*, p. 55), and this thing poetry is what Bateson (*op. cit.*, p. 91) calls characteristically romantic. It is not merely that the poetry of things may rise from a certain kind of 'plastic' or 'visual' imagination, but also that the philosophical standards of the times may establish such emphasis evaluatively.
toned, whiten'd, freshly-flower'd, half-angered, lily-cradled, dazzled, many of fixed description but more of moving attitude, and even more in the active gazing, singing, leaning, glowing, trembling, brimming, dawning, down-deepening, full-flowing, whirling, quick-falling, ever-floating. Not only the greater abundance of these last, but also their change in kind to a greater precision and objectivity, the change from falling to quick-falling, and from flower'd to freshly-flower'd, illustrate the new business of the adjective actively to discriminate rather than passively to assign.

Adverb and verb, then, as well as noun object, participate more and more in the functions of the nineteenth-century adjective: thus aid it, and thus displace it. For what is happening, look at "The Lady of Shalott" itself:

On either side the river lie
Long fields of barley and of rye,
That clothe the wold and meet the sky;
And thro' the field the road runs by
To many-tower'd Camelot;
And up and down the people go,
Gazing where the lilies blow
Round an island there below,
The island of Shalott.

Willows whiten, aspens quiver,
Little breezes dusk and shiver
Thro' the wave that runs forever
By the island in the river
Flowing down to Camelot.
Four gray walls and four gray towers,
Overlook a space of flowers,
And the silent isle embowers
The Lady of Shalott.

The eleven adjectives in the eighteen lines make many pertinent illustrations. First, there are fewer of them; second, one clear reason for the lessening is that the verbs whiten and dusk, if no others, do the work of adjectives, as barley, rye, lilies, willows, breezes, island, walls, and flowers also serve to specify. Third, the four gray walls and towers specify numerically, a characteristic new to epitheting in the degree in which Tennyson uses it. Fourth, the interest in color, and in long and
little, are major for Tennyson. Fifth, the gazing and flowing, against many-tower'd and silent and either side and along with the adjectiving verbs, set up motion in a scene which is then made to become more than a visible picture for the eye. All these traits are strongly Tennysonian, and representatively indicate, I suggest, the changing nature of the poetic adjective through him. This is not to suggest, of course, that there are not still long passages in his work and the work of his contemporaries which sound like Milton, Collins, or at least Wordsworth, in their adjectiving, but merely to suggest that poem after poem embodies in brief space the abstractions of vocabulary which can be drawn from cold tabulations and cold concordances. The virtue of the coldnesses is of course that they allow us to recognize in the poems what we actually see there.

Even the closest to stage-set scene in Tennyson uses little actual adjectival construction.

There lies a vale in Ida, lovelier
Than all the valleys of Ionian hills.
The swimming vapor slopes athwart the glen,
Puts forth an arm, and creeps from pine to pine,
And loiters, slowly drawn. On either hand
The lawns and meadow-ledges midway down
Hang rich in flowers, and far below them roars
The long brook falling thro' the cloven ravine
In cataract after cataract to the sea.

This is the long, five-accent descriptive line of Milton, Pope, Collins, Keats, but now differently constructed. Few of the major nouns, not glen, arm, pine, lawn, ledge, cataract, take epithetical essential adjectives preceding them. Nor do the main terms, lovelier, all, Ionian, swimming, drawn, rich, long, cloven, falling, in themselves set up a theme. All are still important, and certainly frequent enough, but their distinction is that they provide more of a moving than a modeling force. In the later Maud as through the earlier poems these traits hold, and through the various verse forms which Tennyson employs in these two sections of his work.

We look, then, in later nineteenth-century poetry, on the assumption that these lines and generalizations are representative, for a lessening,
narrowing, intensifying, breaking up, perhaps even conventionalizing of the great adjective poetic force of Keats and his kind.

As represented by Browning, Arnold, and Rossetti, and by Housman, as by Poe, Longfellow, and Emerson in America, the level of adjective usage in the nineteenth century is indeed lower. It is equal in quantity to Tennyson’s for most of these, and less, six in ten, for Browning, Emerson, and Housman. Of Housman it may be said that his normal lyrical line is shorter, three or four main accents instead of the five-stressed line we have, as a whole, been dealing with. But here two points should be made: one, that if we add a third again as many adjectives to Housman’s portion, for the sake of stabilizing the line unit of measure, the frequency of his use is still below Keats’ and the eighteenth-century level and equal to the norm of his time; and the other, that Housman’s very consistent use of a shorter line is significant; he did not apparently feel a need to make extra room for epithets.

From Clee to heaven the beacon burns,
   The shires have seen it plain;
From north and south the sign returns,
   And beacons burn again.

Look left, look right, the hills are bright,
   The dales are light between,
Because ’tis fifty years tonight
   That God has saved the Queen.

These lines are picturing lines, yet only bright and light, and plain if one accepts its form as adjectival, are used to describe. Beacon and shires, Queen and the fifty years are closer to the heart of the stanzas. There are not more than seven adjectives in all the eight stanzas of the poem, and few of these are descriptive. And in the second Shropshire poem again, the cherry poem, certainly one for a delicacy of color and fragrance in epithet, half of the ten epithets in the twelve lines, except for loveliest and woodland, hung and wearing, and little, are number terms: threescore and ten, twenty, seventy, fifty, fifty. This is much more a poem of concept than of scene. Illustrating, on the other hand, Housman’s line-by-line use of descriptive epithet when he felt like it is the beginning of “Reveille.”
Wake! The silver dusk returning
   Up the beach of darkness brims,
And the ship of sunrise burning
   Strands upon the eastern rims.
Wake! The vaulted shadow shatters,
   Trampled to the floor it spanned,
And the tent of night in tatters
   Straws the sky-pavilioned land.

Colored as this is, it is again not scenic, but rather full of qualities which combine into mood and atmosphere. The terms are to be recognized as Tennysonian in their active verbal forms; the past participles of the second stanza seem as full of motion as the present participles of the first.

The few long-lined poems in the group still use something less than one adjective per line, and make up for this scarcity by noun lists:

   The lads in their hundreds to Ludlow come in for the fair;
   There's men from the barn and the forge and the mill and the fold, ... 

and

   He gives me beer and breakfast and a ribbon for my cap, ... 

and

   Horror and scorn and hate and fear and indignation—

In these poems, then, though there are still plenty of adjectives and even adjective themes, we have lost the sense of epithet as essential and structural. As we began to see in Tennyson, adjective less inevitably follows adjective from half line to half line. The standard of arrangement and emphasis is much like that in the simplest Wenlock poems: the lads, the broom are golden, and the snow is cold, on a recurring note but not a regular one.

Since Housman is the most modern poet for whom we have concordance information, and since many critics indeed still call *The Shropshire Lad* a "modern poem," we can for the sake of formal pattern take Housman to be the fifth in our proposed line of colloquial, unadjectival poets whose influence was strong in the beginning halves of their respective centuries. Wyatt and Pope died in the forties, Wordsworth in 1850, Donne and Housman in the thirties of their centuries.
were poets of great influence upon tones and techniques. All, as a bond
in the pattern of this study, used adjectives only about half as much as
the main Spenser-Milton-Collins-Keats line] later in each century
used them. According to this pattern, we may well expect the new great
poet of the 1950's to 1970's to be again a great descriptive and decorative
poet; the relationship has been repeated from century to century in
our history. On the other hand, descriptive adjective use can be seen
to have reached a peak in Collins' and Keats' time, in general accept-
ance and originality, and to have turned toward decline in many minor
ways. For Wyatt and the metaphysical poets of Donne's school the
norm of frequency had been seven in ten lines. For the eighteenth
century, from Pope through Wordsworth, the norm was ten to twelve
in ten, and more in Thomson and the Wartons, with Collins as center.
After Keats in the nineteenth century, through Rossetti, Housman,
Eliot, and Yeats, and with the exception of Hopkins and Whitman, the
range is from nine to six in ten lines. We have our choice of specula-
tions. Either century cycle or long trend will maintain itself; or one
will work within the other, as heretofore. Our speculations are ham-
pered by lack of collected concordance material for recent poets. We
may at least look a little further into Housman's choices, as those of
the only "modern" easily tabulable.

Housman's seven major adjectives are bad, dead, good, high, little,
old, young. The first he shares with Donne and Milton, the second with
Donne and the Elizabethans, the rest with the poets of the nineteenth
century or later, except for young, which he and Poe alone char-
acteristically stress. In addition, Housman uses brave, strong, and true
secondarily, of which brave is his own, strong also Poe's, and true from
Elizabethan tradition; and also he stresses primarily still as an adja-
tive, but since this term is often listed only partially in concordances
because of its far more frequent adverbial use by most poets, we cannot
discover its relationships, except to surmise that in the nineteenth cen-
tury the adjective descriptive form had perceptibly increased. At any
rate, what is most clearly notable in Housman is his return to emphasis
on standards, on bad, good, and true, and to Elizabethan dead, which
he combines with his own characteristic young. His high-little-old
combination is a romantic one, characteristic also of Wordsworth and Keats. Thus, he adds no new sense terms, and discards most. In his major-word list he has discarded also eye, taken over Poe's night, and added his own characteristic lie and lad. His poetry has plainly a strait and narrow emphasis: on the old standards of human relation simplified, specialized in youth and lad, and given some remnant of natural setting and association.

In the context of the major modifiers the terms are, as might be expected, more abstract and more concrete, less rich, more homely. The world is bad, so is one's temper. Friends, man, chap, Lord are good, and so are day and night. Man and lad die, so do cow and toad. Rocks and heavens, hours and fortunes are high, little, and old, and so are shoulder, drift, roof-tree, hovel, bee, goloshes, man, and moon. This sort of juxtaposition is at the heart of Housman's poetic thought; and yet reminds of Donne. Housman is in much major agreement with Donne, yet is little like him; the complex explications have become simpler implications, and we see in the romantic un-Elizabethan high larks and air, little hour and luck, and still streets, nights, and valleys, a sort of easy unity for Shropshire which Donne would not have found. Housman's juxtapositions are the less cosmic and the more resolvable.

The proportions of his kinds of adjectives are by no means Elizabethan, but rather exactly Tennysonian. His use of quantitative terms was minor, though in content, as we have noted, these changed back from the average nineteenth-century all and some to the earlier more particular numbers. His participial uses agree with his time in being larger than before, though he did not maintain the present-participial emphasis of Tennyson. Living, dying, lying, crying, and other simply named actions are typical, along with a little glittering and such, and the past forms put a special stress on their very pastness, on the dead, lost, blown, undone type, the sense of the irrevocable. Here again we see an interesting contrast to Donne. Both poets were particularly interested in time, as we have noted: Donne in the old and the new, Housman in old and young. The relationship has changed; Donne's was a forward, Housman's a backward look, even for his young men. This backward look in the use of old was a strong nineteenth-century
development from Coleridge on, and Housman altered it from romance to human, to the oldness of individual age. The increasing consciousness of time which we have noted from Donne to Pope to Wordsworth, indeed in the least adjectival of the poets, here is extended in Housman’s stress on day and night as main nouns as well as young and old as main adjectives. Old was an old word, Chaucerian, and with various shades, but ignored by the adjective line, Spenser, Milton, Collins. The rest were late emphases: youth with Collins and Gray and young particularly with Poe and Housman, day with Burns, Wordsworth, Emerson, Housman, time with Wordsworth and Lanier, night for Poe and Housman, and perhaps the further specification of sun for Emerson; new with Donne, Pope, Browning, Emerson. It is apparent that interest in time was not only a developed interest through the centuries and somehow involved as has often been said in the “romantic” view, but also an interest counter to the pictorialism of the main adjectival line. It serves to define not only a trend, but a type of poet. So Housman, in spite of his many Tennysonian arrangements and proportions, participates in the special identifying time stress of the Donne-Wordsworth school. As we have seen, his past-participial modifiers show this emphasis vividly; they are not the arrested visions of a scene, but rather, often, the dead, the past, the lost, the spent, slain, forgotten, forsaken, short-lived modifiers of Shropshire’s youthful world.

The sensable details of this world are described in proportion equal to Tennyson and Keats, and with many of the same words, though fewer of the rich ones. Bright, light, heavy, silver, thick, green, mute, dull, pale, wan, hollow, yellow, dewy, warm, gold, sea-deep, fleet, brittle, bitter, wet, cressy, sombre, purple, blue, brown, windy, and such, are all at home in the nineteenth century, perhaps somewhat muted. Clean, empty, and endless are terms Housman tends to repeat, and they are characteristic of his tendency toward a stripped effect. His -y forms are average; his compounds, too; and his negatives, equaling Keats in his very special -less form, in trustless, careless, strengthless, breathless, boundless, ceaseless, soundless, lightless, windless, speechless, endless, changeless, hueless, luckless, seeming less personal in their discrimination, and perhaps more negative.
For the 1940's Housman provides a norm of poetic expression which maintains smaller use of adjective contents and structures; smaller use of adjectives of sense and more of standard and time relations; homelier, more negative, more conceptual, less visual, references; the use of colors and qualities still, but for atmospheres more than scenes or themes; strong participial modifiers and compounds kept from the Milton tradition; the use of more particular nouns and verbs to do some of the specifying work of adjectives; the narrowing of thematic range and the subordinating of adjective function to the carrying of tone. In many respects, as in sense stress, this norm maintains the standards of the high adjectival Collins-Keats level. In some, as in its interests of major reference, and in many of its juxtapositions and particularities, it returns very strongly to the Wyatt and Donne, and the Pope and Wordsworth, tradition. In many, finally, it suggests a weakening of both lines in that it makes no great innovations in either. One contribution alone seems clear, the power of atmospheric suggestion in all the forms of speech, the sort of immediate and mutable discrimination which is represented by the recent coming of night and day into the realm of poetic emphasis.

Housman, in the concordance of his work as well as in his Shropshire Lad, suggests our future in only tentative fashion. Perhaps the particularities of sense as characteristic of emotional tone are so much more deeply to be explored that our later decades will surpass even Collins and Keats in the vocabulary of modification. Housman's conventionalizing of traits may indicate perhaps strengthening, perhaps mere narrowing, of the colloquial nonadjectival tradition of which in some respects he is so clearly a part. He is not at least a part of, nor does he seem to presage, the great poetry of the visual, the history of which stands strongly forth in the representative history of the adjective. Whatever the future interweaving of the two poetic modes we have distinguished, that aspect of one which took the form of scenic epithet would seem to have had its day.
IV. MODERN QUALITY

Discussion is being carried on, in the literary journals, of just such a shift in focus as Housman would seem to have prepared against. Housman is just now out of favor. His mode of atmosphere and negative speech, in which Yeats and Eliot shared and Auden notably worked, has not a rich enough texture even in the complex modern phases of Auden for many of the younger poets now. Critics are pointing out, and sometimes praising, a new mid-twentieth-century poetry of a sensory, decorative, highly colored kind. Among other critics, Arthur Mizener has shown in the work of young English and Americans since Auden a tendency toward "combinations of confused magnificence" which stress not subject or syntax but verbalized details, in epithets, appositions, and mixed metaphors.¹ It is the fashion to label this loose richness 'baroque,' and indeed some of the historical associations of the poetic epithet tradition are thus illuminated. But the label is dangerous as it ignores the force and variety of temporal change in general and the special structural powers of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century baroque in particular. One may as well apply the more modern label 'surrealist,' which also covers an area of art in which syntax is less important than quality, verb than adjective, norm than extranorm. In such surrealist sentences as "The tomato is a balloon" or "The winged vapor seduces the locked bird,"² and in such games of surrealist hazard as the accidentalized application of epithets to nouns, one sees again the preoccupation with striking qualities rather than reasoning structures which has been attributed by some to the baroque, and which is at least a clear part of what we have seen to be, in far simpler form, the epithet tradition.

This tradition, as it has influence for 1940, comes probably not direct from Keats, whose emphasis though interior was still scenic, but rather from such poets of intense quality as Hopkins and Whitman whose

² André Breton, What Is Surrealism? tr. David Gascoyne (London, Faber & Faber, 1936), p. 25, and David Gascoyne, A Short Survey of Surrealism (London, Cobden-Sanderson, 1936), p. 78. Surrealism is concerned with "the crisis of the object." "It is essentially upon the object that surrealism has thrown most light in recent years." Breton, op. cit., p. 86.
inscapes and cosmic reaches both move away from picture or procession. For neither of these poets do we have the backing of concordance information; our speculations in the modern field, after Housman, must rise from the texts alone. The text of Hopkins, in epithet kind, and category, serves rigorously the fond discriminations of quality, of color, freshness, wildness, for which his major words of responsive affection were sweet, dear, lovely. Not so much in these characteristic labels, but more strongly in his color discriminations of black, grey, blue, he looks forward, supporting the painting principle in this sense: "Vermilion, saffron, white' is a brilliant stroke (that is a lie, so to speak, of Lessing's that pictures ought not to be painted in verse, a damned lie—so to speak.") He demanded for poetry the elaborate, descriptive, adjectival, for his world of the inner forms of things, of wood, fire, cloud, lawn, wind. He kept attitudes of good and sweet from the Elizabethans, affections of fond and kind from the eighteenth century, but mostly the colors, the bright, dark, high, low, from Milton and Keats, contributing his lovely, sheer, fresh to his own version of sense.

As Keats had doubled Collins' compound epithets, so Hopkins doubled Keats', with his enthusiastic scroll-leaved, whirlwind-swivelled, heart-forsook, care-coiled, dapple-dawn-drawn, piece-bright, very-violet-sweet. The hyphen seemed to draw out the quality into words; the -y form, too, in excess of roundy, branchy, beadbonny drew out more traits than even the eighteenth century had tried. These thickenings by device are characteristic of Hopkins' use of epithet tradition, and of what we take from him: the "sprung," emphatic enthusiasm of sense.

The Whitman epithet, which we have taken for its freer, looser powers, was adapted to his piling-up technique. He didn't chant battles or deeds, but he chanted qualities; as, from "Tears":

O storm, embodied, rising, careering with soft steps along the beach!
O wild and dismal night storm, with wind—O belching and desperate!
O shade so sedate and decorous by day, with calm countenance and regulated pace,
But away at night as you fly, none looking—O then the unloosen'd ocean,
Of tears! tears! tears!

The fourteen adjectives in five lines here are twice Whitman's norm of fourteen in ten, and are thus bunched through his poems, now sparsely, now thickly, seldom entirely absent for more than a line or two. Sometimes they balance the line, two and two; sometimes they modify in pairs, often they build up in long lists, often they exclaim; they fit apparently into any portion or function of the Whitman line, and are necessary to its full nature. On an average, Whitman's line is probably about a foot longer than the pentameter which provides an English norm, for most are a rough six feet, and the many seven feet are balanced by the many shorter lines. As Housman's tetrameters consistently provided a little less room for epithets, then, Whitman's rhythm provided a little more, so that the excess of his fourteen in ten is not surprising, and we could expect at least Milton's major twelve from him in a pentameter line. But apart from these leveling estimations, it is also significant that Whitman did hold to the fuller scope and fill it up with the more epithets. Like Hopkins, he belonged to the adjective school and has taught us his trade, through Lindsay, MacLeish, and others, in the rolling epithet, the fat black bucks of the Congo, the lush colors of Conquistador, his own "O powerful western fallen star!" "Weapon shapely, naked, wan," "Perennial roots, tall leaves," "steamers steaming," "ploughmen ploughing," "Starting from fish-shape Paumanok where I was born."

One reading of Whitman would give, I think, a quick, just sense of his epithets: not only that they are many, but also that they are various, with no small group emphasized as in Donne, Yeats, or Eliot; further, that they are active. Whitman agrees with all the adjective poets in emphasis on participial forms, but ignores the past-participial decorative in favor of the present active moving, flowing, gliding, embracing, drooping, watching, rising kind, which gives the poems a sort of suspended animation like that achieved by Auden with the same device. Whitman and Auden both use more participial modifiers—40 per cent of their modifiers, in fact—than any other poet, and both stress the -ing forms, which are so strongly familiar to the Whitman reader. Of quantity terms, again familiarly, the major by far is all. None here of Donne's resolving of somes to ones or of parts to wholes, but here
assertions, rather, in which the every, the many, and some thousands are swept into the all. So too, the major terms do not make small discriminations, but stress some larger points of age, size, sound, in old, young, good, great, little, loud, silent, with the colors grey and white. Since there is no concordance for Whitman, we have not the assurance that these terms are the major ones in the full sweep of his work, but certainly they are outstanding in the sampled thousand lines. They are standard emphases for his time, his own characteristic touch most strong in the relatively new emphasis on youth and in the terms of sound.

Of the standard epitheting devices of his time, Whitman used most, but without the excess of Hopkins. His compoundings approximated Milton’s, Tennyson’s, and the other adjective poets’, and ran to such familiar terms as keen-eyed, gold-colour’d, fire-flashing. His -y terms, in murky, dusky, snowy, briny, silvery, watery, springy, too, are uninventive, and relatively few in number. In general, then, as a major poet in the epithetical line he seems to accept rather than invent, to moderate rather than to elaborate the strongest devices and emphases of his predecessors. Whitman was, I think, a poet of enthusiasm rather than of pattern; and his contribution was one always of vigor and scope, or of delicate, tender attribution, but not of scenic intricacy or pictorial richness.

Therefore his swinging active participle is his most characteristic stress, and with these welcomes, ripenings, failings, trampings, conquerings, venturings, sorrowings, demandings go the sorts of epithets he liked and repeated: absolute fiats, entire star-myriads, joy universal, quenchless faith, sinewy races, virgin soil, hapless silent lovers, impure complexion, red birth, superb children, exhaustless laws, Western sea, million-footed Manhattan, fifth-month grass, obscure shapes, fierce old mother, wild and dismal night storm, briny tear, white shore, limpid spread of air cerulean, vast immortal sons, myriad waves. All these are in the Birds of Passage, Sea-Drift, and the first half of the By the Roadside sections of Leaves of Grass, and suggest, like the epithets of the other sections, Whitman’s strongly evaluative use of adjectives of scope and variety, the centrifugal nature of his epitheting. His epithets
of size and extent, like his active participial forms, served largely to spread out whatever unit of scene or thought he started with, to infuse it with his personal vigor and sense of boundlessness.

Feb. 9, 1878 [Specimen Days].—After an hour’s ramble, now retreating, resting, sitting close by the pond, in a warm nook, writing this, shelter’d from the breeze, just before noon. The emotional aspects and influences of Nature! I, too, like the rest, feel these modern tendencies (from all the prevailing intellections, literature, and poems,) to turn everything to pathos, ennui, morbidity, dissatisfaction, death. Yet how clear it is to me that those are not the born results, influences of Nature at all, but of one’s own distorted, sick or silly soul. Here, amid this wild, free scene, how healthy, how joyous, how clean and vigorous and sweet!

This prose of Whitman’s is like his poetry, built on the principles of commas and exclamation points, with temporary condemitory modifications but eventually expansive modifications of praise. The far in the near, the ideal in the real, are discovered by active epithets and spread over time and space to infinity!

July 23, 1878 [Specimen Days].—The East.—What a subject for a poem! Indeed, where else a more pregnant, more splendid one? Where one more idealistic-real, more subtle, more sensuous-delicate? The East, answering all lands, all ages, peoples; touching all senses, here, immediate, now—and yet so indescribably far off—such retrospect! The East—long-stretching—so losing itself—the orient, the gardens of Asia, the womb of history and song—forth-issuing all those strange, dim cavalcades—

Florid with blood, pensive, rapt with musings, hot with passion,
Sultry with perfume, with ample and flowing garments,
With sunburnt vision, intense soul and glittering eyes.

Always the East—old, how incalculably old! And yet here the same—ours yet, fresh as a rose, to every morning, every life, to-day—and always will be.

This is the thick-with-adjectives texture which is central to Whitman’s thought and technique, the sensuous but not essentially scenic, the mixed, enthusiastic, cumulative.

Hopkins and Whitman, those contemporaries whose bond was so tenuous—even feared by Hopkins,—worked almost exactly at opposite sites in their mutual epithet stress. Hopkins used the

4 The Letters of Gerard Manley Hopkins to Robert Bridges, ed. Claude Collee Abbott (London, Oxford Univ. Press, 1935), p. 155: the now well-known remark, “I always knew in my heart Walt Whitman’s mind to be more like my own than any other man’s living. As he is a very great scoundrel this is not a pleasant confession.”
adjective to intensify; Whitman used it to extensify. Indeed, Hopkins’ “inscape” is the difference between them, for while both were essentially concerned with the problem of the one in the many and the many in one, Hopkins used his poetry to carry himself inward to the heart of scenes and objects, while Whitman used his to collect, assemble, en-mass, take all to himself and spread himself wide to all. So while Hopkins in “Pied Beauty” stresses things “counter, original, spare, strange,” in their individuality, Whitman at the end of Specimen Days calls for the “costless average, divine, original, concrete.” On originality, and doubtless on divinity, they agree, but on counter and spare versus average they differ. For Whitman wrote, as Hopkins might have, in the middle of Democratic Vistas, “There is, in sanest hours, a consciousness, a thought that rises, independent, lifted out from all else, calm, like the stars, shining eternal. This is the thought of identity—yours for you, whoever you are, as mine for me. Miracle of miracles, beyond statement, most spiritual and vaguest of earth’s dreams, yet hardest basic fact, and only entrance to all facts.” But he also wrote, in a note to the 1876 Preface to Leaves of Grass, with a generality which Hopkins would not have used: “Probably, indeed, the whole of these varied songs, and all my writings, both volumes, only ring changes in some sort, on the ejaculation, How vast, how eligible, how joyful, how real, is a human being, himself or herself.” Not vast and joyful, but rather fresh and lovely, are Hopkins’ affirmative epithets. The painter’s eye—and Hopkins is much more a painter than Whitman—sees things more self-contained than does the chanter’s.6

Both these epithetical strains we have inherited, painter’s and chanter’s. A mixture of the two appears in the poems of Sandburg and MacLeish. There are varieties in Yeats, Eliot, and Auden, and these are fuller of epithet than the lyric suggestions of Housman at the epithet nadir. Yet none of these, I think, is so thick with adjectives as the poetry at the nineteenth-century zenith in Keats, Hopkins, Whitman.

6 Compare Whitman and Hopkins on kingfishers, for example. Whitman, Specimen Days, July 14, 1878; August 4, 1879 (Prose Works, pp. 106, 130); Hopkins, No. 34 in Poems; and see my article, “The Sweet and Lovely Language,” Kenyon Review (June, 1944). Note Whitman’s emphasis on the ‘vital,’ the ‘electric,’ and on sound, and on active participle forms; note Hopkins’ on the inner structure of the scene. Whitman’s notes paint scenes constantly, but in flashes.
Neither do they picture so vividly in sensory terms, nor do they sing so feelingly in expansive terms. Though influences of stress and intensity and cumulation are perceptible, the living poets of present prestige seem closer to the Housman (or more basically the Donne) than the Whitman-Hopkins tradition. Perhaps only to the generation just rising will dawn the fullness of epithet once again.

Eliot is a good example of strong twentieth-century tendencies, and Eliot takes a middle position. Of the notable traits of major epitheters he stresses about half. The consistent frequency of his adjectives is eight in ten lines, a middle range. He is like Whitman and the moderns in his strong use of participles, especially the active clutching, leaning, turning ones. But he is unlike the epitheters, old or young, in his neglect of compound and y-form modifiers, and in his relatively strong stress on a few major terms, his lack of interest in a wide variety of sense terms. He has not, either, the many negative un- or -less words of the Keats school, but rather his major terms themselves, in context, have a negative cast. Dry, white, dead, [good], old, broken, lost, for example, appearing most frequently in the thousand lines of the 1920 poems through *Ash Wednesday*, are like the more minor little, low, wet, empty, brown, red, violet in their own minor key of senses keen but spent. Death, attrition, and a lost time are primary, with more of Housman’s emphasis than any other’s, in the combination of dead-little-old, but without his relief of high and young. Sense of color and touch are strong, as in the epitheters, far stronger for example than in Donne; but they are used not for painting scenes, but for conveying atmospheres of feeling and the values in feeling. In dry and wet and white and brown and empty speaks Eliot’s “felt thought.” It is a thought which has accepted nineteenth-century terms of quality for emphasis and which has then returned to them and through them the evaluative standards of the metaphysicals. Both are changed by the combination, and both, by Eliot, intensified and weakened: both sensory and abstract variety lessen as one atmospheric theme prevails and dry works in the music of its shifting returning contexts.

An example of his richest adjective recurrence, his atmospheric value tone, is at the last of *Ash Wednesday*. 
And the lost heart stiffens and rejoices
In the lost lilac and the lost sea voices
And the weak spirit quickens to rebel
For the bent golden-rod and the lost sea smell
Quickens to recover
The cry of quail and the whirling plover
And the blind eye creates
The empty forms between the ivory gates
And smell renews the salt savour of the sandy earth.

This sort of qualifying emphasis is to be found even in excess in many poems today: using “the” as if to indicate a type or well-known trait, then making this obviated quality shift its reference to an effect of mysterious variety, as in the shift from the “lost” of heart to the “lost” of lilac, thus at the same time giving certainty and taking it away. Such a play over terms Donne might make, from that which feels lost to that which has been lost, and the combining of weak, bent, blind, empty objects and subjects with verbs of creation, renewal, and recovery. But Donne would not make these shifts and confrontations in such atmospheric terms; he would maneuver concepts and relations rather than tones of feeling, and arrive at an end, with more use of the vocabulary of judgment along the way. The good of Eliot’s major list is contained almost wholly in his ironic refrain, his quoted “Good night, sweet ladies,” wherein the good night becomes “goonight” most of the time. In his lack of terms of standard, Eliot is far from Donne indeed; he is rather close to Keats, who also made good an irony or a condescension. Certainly in much of his sensory writing Eliot is an inheritor and thematic refiner of the epithet tradition.

On the other hand, in places like the end of Waste Land I, where he speaks in conversational tone, moving out of descriptive recitative. Eliot gives up his adjective stress:

“You who were with me in the ships at Mylæ!
“That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
“Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?
“Or has the sudden frost disturbed its bed?
“Oh keep the Dog far hence, that's friend to men.
“Or with his nails he'll dig it up again!
“You! hypocrite lecteur!—mon semblable,—mon frère!”
Of *last, sudden, hypocrite*, only hypocrite is strong to the theme; the idea is not borne adjectively. Or, in the famous passage in III, we get Eliot’s spirit at what seems to me its best, that is, at its most characteristically nonchalantly qualitative:

She turns and looks a moment in the glass,
Hardly aware of her departed lover;
Her brain allows one half-formed thought to pass:
“Well now that’s done: and I’m glad it’s over.”
When lovely woman stoops to folly and
Paces about her room again, alone,
She smooths her hair with automatic hand,
And puts a record on the gramophone.

Aware, departed, one, half-formed, glad, lovely, alone, automatic, are neither careless on the one hand nor elaborate on the other; not nominally sensory, they nevertheless convey aptly Eliot’s sort of dramatized sensibility, where *departed* and *glad* and *alone* speak from the actor’s point of view, and *aware*, *half-formed*, *lovely*, *automatic* from the observer’s in all his prejudgment yet sympathy. Here Eliot writes least as if he were limiting a tradition and most as if he were creating one. But it is not such vocabulary or technique which comes clearest in the major terms of his work. There in his thematic *dry*, *old*, *lost*, *white*, his ironic *good*, the full pleasure of the sensory tradition has been preserved and inverted, turned in upon a judgment of itself.

Such turning of the sensory to the purposes of judgment, with such emphasis upon the less pleasant sensory, is, I think it may be said, a characteristic which Eliot shares with much modern poetry. It is less outstandingly his own contribution than his epitheting in ironic quotation. It is characteristic of Yeats also, in his 1920’s period, in his emphasis on *old* and *wild*, *young* and *ancient*, *empty* and *blind*, with *long*, *great*, and *good* as more traditional terms of standard. *Sick*, *foul*, *insane*, *mad* are major negatives for him, and even among the sparing

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6 Edmund Wilson, in *Axel’s Castle*, p. 61, says: “In ‘The Tower’ (1928), certain words such as ‘bitter,’ ‘wild,’ and ‘fierce,’ which he was able, a few years ago, to use with such thrilling effect, have no longer quite the same force.” That I disagree with the evaluation is beside the main descriptive point of interest: that quantitatively these terms were strong in “The Tower.” Theodore Spencer in “Antaeus” seems to agree with Wilson, as with Henry Taylor in respect to Wordsworth, that these words like “wild” were used far too loosely and freely in nineteenth-century poetry. Yet I think that they were very close to the heart of its intentions.
sense qualities which he employs, such value sense as of rich and bitter is at the fore. Yeats is by no means a painter, or even a chanter, poet in the epithet tradition. Like Eliot, he works in epithet more sparingly and mostly for the sake of atmosphere as it enforces concept, his major concepts and atmospheres of time and loss, strangeness and nobility, ruin and fable, humanity and death, carried in minor key by old and great, wild and empty, and not elaborated by many of the usual devices of epitheting.

So with our younger mentor of the 1930's, W. H. Auden also. In him again is much of the Eliot pattern: the lesser and negative sensory, the lack of constructed epithet device in compound formations; the active emphasis, on the other hand, upon present-participle forms of making, leaning, falling, waking, remembering, not decorative or even very exterior, but conveying the activities of the spirit in modificatory form. What is perhaps most peculiar to Auden's epitheting is its Latinic variety. Simple good, new, hard, certain, old, young are major for him but relatively spare. He stresses a more technical and untraditional poetic vocabulary, as of missionary grin, local wrong, sinister direction, in the Double Man, and porcelain filter, hostile capture, peripheral fault, necessary error, strict beauty, independent delight, orthodox bone, neighborly shame, subaltern mockery, and immeasurable neurotic dread in the earlier XXX Poems. Especially there is the abstract application which Randall Jarrell itemizes in his noteworthy essay on Auden, the abstract modification of a concrete term, or the reverse, to an effect of incongruity in neutral summer, small uncritical islands, nude and fabulous epoch. Auden is calling a halt here to the scene-painting of the epithet tradition. He provides the scene in nouns, but abstracts, humanizes, evaluates it in adjectives. Much further of what Jarrell says to be characteristic of Auden's technique in language is borne out by detailed examination of his epitheting in the Poems. As Jarrell says, his adjectives are "scarce" (only moderately scarce, nine in ten lines); they shift places with nouns and other forms of speech; they are strongly participial and their range of reference is rather spe-

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cialized. Since my interest is not, like Jarrell’s, in the change in Auden, from early to late, my figures do not greatly concern rhetorical or referential shifts and do not, at their general level, indicate the major changes which Jarrell stresses. As far as frequency and proportion go, the lyrics in the Double Man differ from the earlier only in their lesser stress on participles. The adjectives are not more, as Jarrell believes, and still repeat the old, the good, the tall and the abstractions characteristic of their poet. The closer study of his terms remains to do; what is significant for this larger survey is Auden’s general likeness to others of his time, to Yeats and Eliot and indeed to Housman, rather than to Hopkins or Whitman the epitheters, in several major aspects of poetizing. In these aspects Auden is “modern”: in fewer epithets, in fewer sensory epithets especially, and in fewer compounding devices of decoration; and, on the positive side, in strong stress on the active participial, in thematic emphasis on time in young and old, and a sense of loss and strangeness.

If these are modern, these stresses closer to Donne than Milton, these modifications of the sensory by the abstract, these middle ranges between relations scenic and human, then we are not to expect, I should think, a new strongly epitheted poetry from this present. Not Yeats, nor Pound, nor Eliot, nor Frost, nor Auden, nor indeed Karl Shapiro, who has been suggested as representative of new tendencies, speaks in or toward such a powerful epithet tradition as we see in Spenser or Milton, Keats or Whitman. It is rather as if the two modes of Donne and Milton, which moved toward the Miltonic in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, had now in the last hundred years moved again away, by a general lessening in epithet quantity and by a shift in quality from the compounded, sensory, and directly sympathetic to the spare, active, atmospherically evaluative, abstract, and ironic.

On the other hand, it will be remembered that a great poetic epitheter has risen near every mid-century, and it behooves us to look not only at the traditions and poetries that seem now strong and probable, but also at the possibilities in our time, the closer followers perhaps of the Hopkins and the Whitman tradition. Who would these poets be? Dylan Thomas was suggested by Mr. Mizener along with Shapiro, and
is indeed a candidate much deeper in epithet tradition than Shapiro. Experimenters in "depth" symbolism and the surreal are apt inheritors because of the rich substantial and static qualities of symbol. Or one thinks of Wallace Stevens, as a poet full of the idea and the pleasure and the elaborate artfulness of modification, though actually his epithet emphasis is by no means as strong as I should have thought it to be. One must speculate widely to ask: Who will be the epitheting poet of mid-century? Are we following him unaware? The name of Whitman as influence helps bring to mind a young poet already, and like Keats early, dead, but of great force for the younger generation.

The stars have grooved our eyes with old persuasions
Of love and hatred, birth,—surcease of nations . . .
But who has held the heights more sure than thou,
O Walt!—Ascensions of thee hover in me now
As thou at junctions elegiac, there, of speed
With vast eternity, dost wield the rebound seed!
The competent loam, the probable grass,—travail
Of tides awash the pedestal of Everest, fail
Not less than thou in pure impulse inbred
To answer deepest soundings! O, upward from the dead
Thou bringest tally, and a pact, new bound,
Of living brotherhood!

Here in the voice of Hart Crane speaks the epithet tradition, in all its old splendor, as of 1930. In their mass and order and quality the adjectives, in an "Elizabethan" music, help Crane to convey a unity between self and world and cosmos by, as Waldo Frank says, "the immediate conduit of his senses." They are his culture words, of which Frank says he has none; by their regular recurrence in color and the varieties of sense they provide the steadfast fabric of Crane's poetry, as of Spenser's almost four centuries before. Structurally again there is the balanced line, the participial modifier, the cumulative, even exclamatory, adjective stress.

Thewed of the levin, thunder-shod and lean,
Lo, through what infinite seasons dost thou gaze—
Across what bivouacs of thin angered slain,
And see'st thy bride immortal in the maize!

So does the measure of Spenser’s gentle knight pricking o’er the plain meet with the measure of Whitman’s youthful sinewy races on the American plain, by way of the youth of Keats’ immortal town.

It is in a way good, it gives a powerful and pleasant sense of recognition, to see the whole epithet idiom renewed by Crane. He employs it with enthusiasm and consistency in other sections of his work as well as *The Bridge*. He shows again, as Whitman did, how easily this tradition of idiom adapts itself to a line loosened from some iambic pentameter restrictions. The effect is not greatly altered, even though printed as,

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High, cool,  
wide from the slowly mouldering fire
Of lower heavens,—  
vaporous scars!
Eve! Magdalene!  
or Mary, you?
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Moreover, Crane’s proportioning of adjective types agrees with the epithet tradition of Milton, Collins, Keats, Whitman. Number modification, strong major terms and negatives, all the signs of speaking and reasoning, are subordinated to the painting devices, to sense epithets, compoundings, participial suspensions. *Eddying, whirling, gleaming, spreading, flurried, twisted, shot,* and *sped* are representative of the active portraiture of Crane, closer to the reaching senses of Whitman than to the receiving senses of Keats. Like many moderns, Crane puts the stress on the active participle. His compounds are more decorative than most moderns’; they are freehanded and pictorial, as, for example, *cloud-flown, sun-clasped, gun-grey, snow-silvered, sumac-stained, lynx-barred, buzzard-circleted, oilrinsed, star-glistened, blue-writ and odor-firm, way-up, blue-eyed, planet-sequined.* These are in the numbers of Whitman and Tennyson, Milton and Collins, though they have by no means the fine excess of Keats and Hopkins. They are measured up to by none of the moderns except Yeats.

As for sensory terms, Crane has gone over to them with an emphasis which seems almost complete. Of course it is not, because of course emotion labels like *terrible* and *merry* are as usual strong, and the manufacture of adjectives from nouns, as in *gaseous, cycloramic, laby-
rinthine, is especially strong for Crane, as are his specially cosmic interests in consummate, eternal, infinite, orbic, myriad, pure, perpetual, strange, utmost, vast, in the bardic tradition of Milton and Whitman. Nevertheless, the simpler sense terms make up the fabric of the poetry, in white and new and long and last, in dim and bright, in green and gold and black. These are the major terms, mostly visual, scarcely conceptual. Even of great Crane makes a sensory term, and uses good and true only a couple of times apiece. Silver and grey, deep and high, are strong secondary terms, again sensory.

The contexts, in The Bridge, of Crane’s major word white help show his interest. It will be remembered that white is major for Eliot too, who uses it in his dry bone contexts. Crane called his early poems White Buildings; the color was a central one for him. He uses it with surplice, veil, meteor, Arctic, machine, snow, tempest, escarpment, paradigm, wing, and flower, among others. He varies it with grey and silver decks and citadels. The poem begins:

How many dawns, chill from his rippling rest
The seagull’s wings shall dip and pivot him,
Shedding white rings of tumult, building high
Over the chained bay waters Liberty—

It is the heart of Crane’s method, the half abstract and conceptual picture of active suspension. Bird and bridge are both substance and spirit, with “inviolate curve,” with “immaculate sigh,” in arc condensing eternity. “And of the curveship lend a myth to God.”

“White toil of heaven’s cordons,” white Arctic against a life of green, silver biplanes and hangars, and razor sheen, “white escarpments swinging into light,” “white seizure,” “silver sequel,” and “white choiring wings,” all preserve Crane’s clean vault.

White tempest nets file upward, upward ring
With silver terraces the humming spars,
The loft of vision, palladium helm of stars.

At this white height, rather than white heat, the poem ends in its sensory abstraction:

O Choir, translating time
Into what multitudinous Verb the suns
And synergy of waters ever fuse, recast
In myriad syllables,—Psalm of Cathay!
O Love, thy white, pervasive Paradigm . . .!
From the alloys of green and red, the white is strained and sprung to name purity in all the release of abstractness it has for Crane. To this reach and effect his other major words contribute, too. *Dim, and long,* and their many auxiliaries in *far, vast, distant, wide,* modify both time and space in such terms as *past* and *trail* to expand the universe, as Whitman did; to expand it for Crane away from the concentrations and complexities of the material. *New,* too, carries away and expands, into new realms, reaches, verities, distances, latitudes, and, with the abstractness of the Bridge's paradigm, into *new octaves* and *new integers.*

Like Eliot and Auden, then, Crane shares the modern method of epitheting, the mixing of sensory and conceptual to an evaluative effect. But his emphasis is on the sensory epithet as carrying us closest to ineffable standard, while theirs uses the sensory more in irony and relies upon abstract modification of the sensory to give it value. This difference is perhaps a clue to the nature of the modern adjective school; it uses a great amount of sensory epithet because in direct color, time, and temperature quality it finds, if not the associational and scenic value which Keats and Whitman found, instead the symbolizing power which makes fruitful the combinations with abstraction.

So Wallace Stevens and Dylan Thomas, though they do not use Crane's abundance of epithet, may be considered as part of his epithet tradition and as perhaps indicative of future device in poetry in that their major terms and a larger portion than ever of all their epithets are of simple sight and touch and used evaluatively. Among Stevens' prime epithets are *blue, green, red, white, gold,* and *cold;* among Thomas', *green, dry, dead, long, old, white, windy.* These have not the *great* and *good* survivals of Yeats, Eliot, Auden. They include two to five more major color words. These are the emphases of the almost

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*Babette Deutsch, in* This Modern Poetry (New York, Norton, 1935), p. 145, writes: "One of the reasons why The Bridge is so full of interest is that the poem draws together three significant elements in American poetry: it opens upon the democratic vistas of Whitman; it employs the symbolist method of Poe to record his nervous terror; it celebrates the inviolable self to which Emily Dickinson clung." Crane's technique and philosophy for this poetic section of vista, nerve, and self is clarified by Philip Horton in his Hart Crane: The Life of an American Poet (New York, Norton, 1937), Crane's purpose as he wrote it to Otto Kahn (p. 339) was "an epic of the modern consciousness." He used dissociated images "joined in the circuit of a particular emotion" (p. 333), to gain a sort of photographic surface of an invisible dimension.
pure aesthetics which might have been asked for fifty years ago. But here their values are not descriptive or associational; they are turned to concept and abstraction. The discipline of Stevens is far from the rhapsody of Crane, yet as value is *white* for Crane it is *blue* for Stevens in a technique of statement which carries through their poetries in common. *Good* is gone from the lists of these poets. They play in very fact upon a blue guitar.

Glass, cloth, weather, flowers, islands are red and green and gold; so are also phases, centers, and beginnings, for Stevens. Colors are the human for him, the interpretive; and green is the warm and living.

    Fat girl, terrestrial, my summer, my night,
    How is it I find you in difference, see you there
    In a moving contour, a change not quite completed? ... 

    Until flicked by feeling, in a gilded street,
    I call you by name, my green, my fluent mundo.
    You will have stopped revolving except in crystal.

As for the modern painting artist, which Stevens in his own way is, color is the directest medium for expression of concept.

    Violets, doves, girls, bees and hyacinths
    Are inconstant objects of inconstant cause
    In a universe of inconstancy. This means

    Night-blue is an inconstant thing.

Art adorns and colors and transforms, it is the fictive covering, and the complexities of life, therefore, come under its modification. So, though Stevens is fond too of the finest abstract terms of poetic speculation, as when he says

    Perhaps there are moments of awakening,
    Extreme, fortuitous, personal, in which

    We more than awaken, sit on the edge of sleep,

still, “It must be abstract” is only the first principle of his supreme fiction. “It must change” is his second, and “It must give pleasure” his third. His pleasure has a color.
The freshness of transformation is
The freshness of a world. It is our own,
It is ourselves, the freshness of ourselves,
And that necessity and that presentation

Are rubbings of a glass in which we peer.
Of these beginnings, gay and green, propose
The suitable amours. Time will write them down.

For Thomas too, the word is green. Even more green. With it goes warm and summer, as against dry and old, and as involved with them.

The force that through the green fuse drives the flower
Drives my green age; that blasts the roots of trees
Is my destroyer.

This force that is the same for inner and outer landscape makes the epithets for the two interchangeable, so that while orchards are red-eyed, anatomy on the other hand is paintable in scenic terms. In the body the green blooms and the red rivers run and the breath is the wind. That is the “green myth” Thomas poetizes, in all its varieties of doom. By this device, his finely invented abstractions apply, like Auden’s, to the concrete world: ornamental winter, guided seas, mighty mornings, foreign tree, sensual root, symboled harbor, colic season, with perhaps less depth and startle than Auden’s. On the other hand, his vivider sense terms, nearly a half of all his simple epithets, are complicated by their connection with an abstracted bodily landscape more obscure than they.

A process in the weather of the heart
Turns damp to dry; the golden shot
Storms in the freezing tomb.
A weather in the quarter of the veins
Turns night to day; blood in their suns
Lights up the living worm.

Or:

The body prospered, teeth in the marrowed gums,
The growing bones, the rumor of manseed
Within the hallowed gland, blood blessed the heart,
And the four winds, that had long blown as one,
Shone in my ears the light of sound,
Called in my eyes the sound of light.
And yellow was the multiplying sand,
Each golden grain spat life into its fellow,
Green was the singing house.

Such decorative imagination of the unseen, like Stevens' of the seen, calls for support, as one might expect, of the other devices conventional to rich sensory expression, of much participial qualification and much compounding, and making of adjectives from nouns. Thomas is enthusiastic here, more even than Crane and much more than Stevens. He points a thick way to the new practitioners in epithetizing. He doubles Crane's compounds and formations, and reinforces the pictorial participle, and his few negatives are in the simple-less form of timeless, shapeless, characteristic of Crane and of Keats. He makes participles even from nouns, as in dolphined, vowelled; and his compounds are vivid, as in black-tongued, bloodred, raw-edged, star-gestured, spider-tongued, sunday-faced, sea-sucked, thumb-stained, cloud-tracking, fin-green, star-set, moon-blown; his seedy, sleepy, noisy, milky, bushy, moony, frosty, windy, wormy, foxy, stony, thorny also, with that ugly vigor he is good at getting down. His rhetoric is a rhetoric of expansion, not in the spatial sense of Crane but in the unfolding sense of making bonds. The obscurity of some of his noun connections is not in his adjectives; they pace with that even inevitability which characterizes the poet whose theme requires that he picture and describe.

In these two, then, in Crane and Thomas, and moderately in Stevens, is to be seen that fashion of which the critics have lately spoken: the epithet fashion in which the simples, richest form. It offsets the logics, atmospheres, and ironies of Yeats, Eliot, and Auden. It carries on exactly the spacious sense-symbolizing tendencies of Milton, Keats, Hopkins, Whitman, by stressing and concentrating them even further in color and temperature terms. In some respects, it must be remembered, the six moderns are much alike. Notably they have agreed in lessening negative and number and concept terms. Notably they have increased participial modifiers to a third or even more of the total, and they have emphasized the active form. And, most notably, they have taken the
epithet from its scenic context, where with Housman it was languishing, and presented it a new, complex function: to give the abstract a local, if often rudely unfamiliar, habitation. Crane and Eliot are closer together than they are apart. Nevertheless, they are two faces to the poetic coin, and one is wreathed, while the other says “We trust.” And though I prefer the moderating instinct of Yeats or of Stevens which explores varieties of abstraction for the epithet itself and holds it to a more thoughtful role, yet it is good to see in Crane and Thomas the wreath tradition flower with scope and enthusiasm and full poetic measure reminiscent of its eighteenth-century pride and possibly indicative of prides to come.
V. CONCLUSION: GOOD TO BRIGHT

The course of epithet tradition, which now in terms of all these modern speculations seems devious though enduring, may be clarified in summary by a return to the major poets and to the major issues in their development: the relation between epithets of standard and epithets of quality. In the simple fall and rise of two terms, good and bright, along with their negatives, one may receive in summary fashion a view in all its variety of the shift from ethic to aesthetic vocabulary in poetry. I say 'vocabulary' rather than 'subject,' because, as we have seen for twentieth-century poets, esthetic terminology in context is strongly full of ethic judgment; bright for the moderns can be a direct substitute for good, as it functions evaluatively. Colors now label judgments. The progress toward this blend, as we have seen, was gradual though sure. Three stages are clear: first, the Elizabethan conceptual stage; second, the eighteenth-century associative stage; third, the modern symbolizing stage. In the first, sensory terms were used figuratively and infrequently; in the second, they were used more often, and as correspondent scenic images; in the third, they were used as symbols for human values, not always in clear visual correspondence but more often in inward reference. Through these three stages is the clear development of the trend which led to the present: the sensory emphasis increasing from Spenser and his school to Milton and Collins and their era, to Keats, Hopkins, Whitman and their modern extremes, against the counterpointed emphasis of the schools of Donne. Stages and direction may both be more vivid as represented briefly by the careers of the two sorts of words, good and bright themselves.¹

To begin with Wyatt: his gentlemanly lyrics agreed with his father Chaucer's fuller human stories in their reliance on good, great, and true, their small care for bright or its opposite dark. For Wyatt, good and bad, like true and false, modify concepts, relationships of reason, intent, favour, fellowship, belief; and these are the contexts of bright also; bright is sensory only seldom, and then only figuratively.

¹In briefer form, "From Good to Bright," PMLA, Vol. X, No. 3 (September, 1945), pp. 766-774.
For example, Wyatt’s *bright glass* in “Compleint of the Absence of His Love” provides a parallel for human nature within four lines, with what was to be standard Elizabethan illustration:

> Alas, the clear crystal, the bright transplendent glass
> Doth not betray the colours hid, which underneath it has;
> As doth th’accumbred sprite the thoughtful throes discover,
> Of fierce delight, of fervent love, that in our hearts we cover: . . .

And his sonnet “How the Lover Perisheth in His Delight” is typical of his use of dark and bright in the dozen times apiece they appear in his total verse.

> Some fowls there be that have so perfect sight,
> Against the sun their eyes for to defend;
> And some, because the light doth them offend,
> Never appear but in the dark or night:
> Other rejoice to see the fire so bright,
> And ween to play in it, as they pretend,
> But find contrary of it, that they intend.
> Alas! of that sort may I be by right;
> For to withstand her look I am not able;
> Yet can I not hide me in no dark place;
> So followeth me remembrance of that face,
> That with my teary eyen, swoln, and unstable,
> My destiny to behold her doth me lead;
> And yet I know I run into the glead.

The birds in sun and firelight are not primarily images of sight, but rather figures of concept, as the dark place is the place of retreat rather than the eighteenth-century grot of gloomy sensibility. At least five times more numerically important to Wyatt were his terms of value and of truth, his “wit so bad” or “good entente,” his “The Lover”:

> Tho’ I cannot your cruelty constrain,
> For my good will to favour me again;
> Though my true and faithful love
> Have no power your heart to move,
> Yet rue upon my pain!

Not only the predominance of *good* over *bright*, but also the contexts of both types, show how peripheral was the notion of sensory modification to Wyatt, and how central, in both sorts of contexts, was the poetic function of verifying and evaluating human relationship.
Spenser, with somewhat more descriptive bright and false, is nevertheless close to Wyatt and the other Elizabethans in his proportions and contexts for these terms. For him, too, good terms are major and bright are not. By the time of Donne, Herbert, and Herrick the spread between the two kinds has increased still further, to a proportion even, in Herrick, of fifteen to one; good is prevailing still more widely and often in these poets, modifying precepts, people, manners, and angels, and appearing far more often in its negative aspect of bad and worse fortunes, times, plagues, and follies. The world for these seventeenth-century men has got explicitly worse in poetry, and it is notable that for none of them is human nature the commonest recipient of the negative epithet; chance is more bad than vice, and angels are as often bad as good.

Using Donne as representative of the three, we discover only minor changes in the century after Wyatt. Evaluative good and bad are still six times dark and bright, though only three times false and true. And note must be made of Herrick’s much stronger evaluative emphasis. The relation of the negative to the positive aspects has changed from one to six in Wyatt to one to two or three in Donne and Herrick, though not in Herbert. Hence all the seventeenth-century bad poisons and devils, worse falsehoods, fortunes, sicknesses, and cities, dark caves, climes, clouds, thoughts, eclipses, plots, false fears and passions, as they present themselves in Donne. Again, and even more than in Wyatt, positive and negative are phrasally connected and balanced, in good against bad, from bad to worse, good from bad, for better or worse, as the two work together and interchange. False and true, but not bright and dark to any strong degree, function in the same sort of dialectic.

What has changed in the century is, as may be expected, the contexts, the objects of modification, and they have changed toward specificness. Wyatt’s reasons and intents have been specified in Donne’s brains, burdens, solemnities, wisdoms, civilities; more vividly still, Wyatt’s meager externalities of cave, rose, glass, fire have grown to a greater body of detail: sallet, engin, meates, morrow, physicke, picture, taper, pit, parcel, spark, court, fruit, torch, clock, spectacles. This is the familiar object-awareness of the Metaphysicals, their sense of micro-
cosmic life and significance. A tulip, actually, is bright for Herrick, and spur, stock, and cable good for Herbert. And it is notable that not the sense terms on the whole, not brightness and darkness, call forth the naming of detail, but rather it is the sense of value that conjures up complexities.

First seeds of every creature are in us,
  What ere the world hath bad, or pretious,
Mans body can produce, hence hath it beene
  That stones, wormes, frogges, and snakes in man are seen:
But who ere saw, though nature can worke soe,
  That pearle, or gold, or corne in man did grow?

So Donne's third poem to the Countesse of Bedford calls up good and evil objects as signs, as examples. So, on the other hand, bright and dark objects are seldom even signs, much less their visible selves; they are usually figures, as in Wyatt, and the "bright hair about the bone" takes in context a good deal of its life from the fact that it figures life forth. Love and courts, ornaments and parcels, and "dear Christ, thy spouse, so bright and clear," all in their brightness are representative of other virtues. Never do they poetize brightness as a special poetic quality for perception.

But a poetry contemporary to theirs does. It is the poetry of Milton, and it makes the great array of the world bright for the brightness' sake. Here is emblazonry as a bright word, and surface, squadron, eminence, pomp, ascension, themselves all, as a matter of fact, terms of sensory power, as Milton marshals them in his dazzling scheme of order and array. Dark, moreover, is no mere conceptual opposite for Milton; he has vivified it scenically as the nether portion of bright, in ocean, waste, descent, foundation, den, and womb, with wild and dreary and dismal, obscure, and silent, the "dark, unbottomed, infinite abyss." His dark world is the depth of firmament and soul, far more extensive and structural than the Elizabethan cloud before the sun; and his bright is the world of high angelic stations and essences, more outward and cosmical than the sparks of fire and of soul with which the brightness of the Metaphysicals was concerned.

With this outward sensuous move of Milton's poetic substance goes,
too, a shift in numerical proportion. While the good-bad terms still prevail, they are only twice, instead of six times, as great as the bright-dark. Secondly, and even more outstandingly, false-true terms have dropped in quantity from a third to a fourth; they are now less frequent than bright-dark for the first time in English poetry, so far as we can tell. So God is justified to man by Milton less as true than as magnificent.

Now also good and bad have become more systematized, less personal, objectified in bad fruits, plights, acts, rape, hell, chains, imprisonment, in good wisdom, courage and success, service, gift, and yet again array. The heavy negative stress of Donne and Herrick is maintained by Milton and given action in human or angelic deed, not either conceptually or phrasally balanced against positives, but rather used partially or comparatively, as in bad “part” or “influence,” or “worse than death.” His was, then, a strong, new kind of poetic material, in many respects which show through the contexts of a few central words. For Milton’s poetry was epical from the beginning, in its outer stresses; more outward even than the talk of Chaucer’s pilgrims or Shakespeare’s actors; outward, that is, in its scenic properties and visual processions and descriptive architectures. So Comus begins:

Before the starry threshold of Jove’s Court
My mansion is, where those immortal shapes
Of bright aerial spirits live inspheric’d
In Regions mild of calm and serene Air, …

And in Paradise Regained (lines 194 ff.) the Son of God enters upon a scene outside but suited to his thought:

He enter’d now the bordering Desert wild,
‘And with dark shades and rocks environ’d round,
His holy Meditations thus pursu’d.

In Milton, then, descriptive detail, sensuous scenic detail became a chief material of poetry. This is not to say that scenery had not been poetic before; it had been much used, by minor Spenserians for example. But in Milton it appeared for the first time consistently and abundantly enough to be recognizable as a chief quantitative force. Bright and dark as representative descriptive adjectives superseded true and false
as representative judgmental adjectives, and heaven and earth began to shine forth pictorially in their depth and height, air and mass, light and shadow.

For Collins, Milton directly prepared. In Collins came the extreme of choice, wherein even judgments of good and bad were not so numerous, not so vital, not so "poetic" as brightness and darkness. Before this extreme was reached, we have some years of poetry in which Pope was representative, and in Pope we see a continuation more strongly of the Donne than of the Milton tradition. It is true that the false and the true have shrunk for him also, but both these and the bright-dark are used only a fourth as often as good and bad. It is true also that negative emphasis is relatively weak for him, but he still does a lot of balancing between opposites in their conceptual sense. In other words, Pope is in a clear and major position of transition from the poetry of human relation to the poetry of physical array, so that while his diction is in main terms a diction of standards and conceptual balances, in increasing degree it has absorbed the material of the bright and dark Miltonic scene, just as the painting of his time was absorbing Italian chiaroscuro. His contexts, too, are more social than scenic, involving such nouns as friend, flatterer, inn, ribaldry, cause, breeding, bishop, lady, landlord, dunce, Muse, Phoebus, and Briton, with that special emphasis on the particularities of the social setup which belonged to his century; but at the same time he pictured forth the cosmos and the moody scene, in dark streams, in "chaos dark and deep," in bright clouds, abodes, courts, and images, in prospects, visions, and diversities, even in noon and crocus, and "evening bright and still."

The time is ripe, the descriptive scene set, for Collins, in the whole substance of whose poetry are fewer goods than brights and almost no trues at all. In the major adjective vocabulary of Collins, and he used more adjectives than most other English poets, are no longer the great, good, and true terms of the Elizabethans but a whole new set of sense modifications like fair, sweet, and wild, deep, soft, and green. For these, though it is somewhat less in quantity, bright as a type is representative as it surpasses good and true. Here is to be a new trend in English poetry, a new material for English poetry, indeed a new poetic, in
which not only Collins’ contemporary Gray, but also Keats, Shelley, and Poe are to participate. Bright has never, of course, the great preponderance which good had, though in Shelley at least it appears with its negative three times as often as good, but through these poets it maintains its steady rise, over the subsidence of poetic goodness and poetic truth. And in most of the rest of whom we have record, in Goldsmith, Burns, Cowper, Coleridge, Wordsworth, Emerson, Lanier, Housman, in all except Tennyson and Browning, bright is a closer second to good than ever before.

In terms of aesthetic versus ethic, therefore, we are able to discern three stages of poetic vocabulary: the sixteenth–seventeenth-century quantitative emphasis on good and bad primarily and true and false secondarily, with bright-dark a very weak third type, a proportion kept also by Pope, Tennyson, Browning; second, the equally strong line from Milton to Housman through Cowper and Wordsworth by which bright-dark was made close second to good; and third, the extreme aesthetic emphasis, shared in by the five intense lyricists, Collins and Gray, Shelley and Keats, and Poe, by which sense terms as represented by bright-dark were made the prime movers of the poetic form. Though it may be at once suggested that the very minor nature of these five explains their aesthetic emphasis, that a poet like Collins cannot be compared in poetic mass to one like Shakespeare or Milton, I think that a reconsidered view will make plain what levelers time and poetic convention are in this respect. If in the proportioning of their major terms the likeness between Wyatt, Shakespeare, and Donne, between minor Elizabethan lyricist and major Elizabethan dramatist, is clear, then the time term “Elizabethan” seems to provide the bond, especially when the other Elizabethans share in it. And if the likeness between Shakespeare and Wyatt can be significant, so can the difference between Shakespeare and Collins, especially when again so different a poet as Milton is at the center of the force toward change.

If we may take Collins as representative not merely of a few intensely specialized and therefore sense-descriptive poets, but rather of the early extreme of a “romantic” movement which we see beginning with Milton (if not sooner) and following through the nineteenth century, then
Collins is the poet for us to observe more closely in his preoccupation with the terminology of sense. Not only are adjectives as a whole abundant for him, but especially sense adjectives, and especially as characteristic of types. In “Ode to Liberty,” for example, he accepts and elaborates Milton’s illuminated universe:

Beyond yon braided Clouds that lie,
Paving the light-embroider’d Sky:
Amidst the bright pavilion’d Plains,
The beauteous Model still remains.

And in “Ode on the Poetical Character” the pageantry:

All the shad’wy Tribes of Mind,
In braided Dance their Murmurs join’d,
And all the bright uncounted Pow’rs
Who feed on Heav’n’s ambrosial Flow’rs.

Dark is strongest in the “Popular Superstitions,” again in the tradition of forests, dells, caves, and strongly supplemented by such frequent terms as dim and shadowy. So while some of the darks and brights are mental, as modifying such a term as Power, most are in the scenic chiaroscuro of shaded grots and groves in shining fields and heavens.

It is interesting to note what has become of good and bad for Collins. Of bad and worse there are none, as in fact all his negatives have lessened. The few goods are bests, best blessings and sweets, and one or two adverbials. The poetic value of these terms has come for him to almost nothing. So much is true also of Gray, who, though he uses good a bit more frequently, applies it to claret or a pen. This colloquial use of good, weakened in valuation and taking largely the form of the familiar positive, as in such phrases as “my good man,” “good day,” “good mood,” “good heavens!” continues strongly in Keats and even surprisingly in Poe’s nonchalant “good night” and “good Politian.” Only those who preserve its quantity preserve also its more serious quality. Housman, for example, associates it with brave and true, with love, creatures, friends; and negatively with fear, the world, and dust. In the main, the drop in quantity of poetic goods is accompanied by a drop in quality of seriousness. An air of condescension floats around poetic good in nineteenth-century poetry.
Poetic *bright* meanwhile has widened the scenic scope it had for Collins into more objects and varieties of sensation: into Keats’ *bright* luxuries, lance, weather, glance; not only sun and star, eye and hair, but also standards and visions; and not only a Miltonic “bright array” but also a non-Miltonic “bright abyss,” a contradictory combination which was beginning to please poets. Poe’s were like Keats’, even more detailed in waterfalls, snakes, flowers, pines, and in the notable “*bright island smile*.” In Poe’s negatives, too, scenes shared with feelings, dark arcades and tides with woes and dark imaginings. So equally the nineteenth-century poets who still made *bright* subordinate to *good* used it in the new fashion of detail consistent with scenic tradition, as Housman, for example, still associated *dark* with lonely and subterranean and *bright* with hills, eyes, reflection, and, more particularly, mintage and rosemary. Less and less are the oppositions maintained. *Bad* and *false* fade in number, and *dark* merges with *bright* in a blend of sensation, as in Keats’ “Ode to Psyche” the subjective landscape lies:

And there shall be for thee all soft delight
   That shadowy thought can win,
   A bright torch, and a casement ope at night,
   To let the warm Love in!

or as Shelley’s more projected landscape (“Revolt of Islam,” XVIII):

   high above was spread
   The emerald heaven of trees of unknown kind,
   Whose moonlike blooms and bright fruit overhead
   A shadow, which was light, upon the water shed.

As the old oppositions do not make strong nineteenth-century poetic distinctions, even the line between ethical and aesthetic judgment is blurred, and *bright* takes over some of the functions of *good* in idealizings like that of Semichorus II in “Prometheus Unbound” (IV, 166 ff.):

   Solemn, and slow, and serene, and bright,
   Leading the Day and outspeeding the Night,
   With the powers of a world of perfect light.

Outer and inner, shade and light, goodness and brightness are poetic in their blend rather than in their separation, now in the nineteenth
century, and by this special change a good part of the substance of poetry has been altered.

The lives of good and bright in poetry demonstrate, therefore, not only by the shift in dominance, not only by the clear consistency of development, not only by the changed relation of negative to positive, but also by the full variety of context, that a great alteration in poetic substance and sensibility came two centuries ago. The decline in quantity of the one epithet *good* can be seen to have significance as representative of a declining interest in human relations and thence in ethical judgment as poetic material, as material of vision, conversation, metaphysic. With lessened quantity of *good* went lessened dignity in its contexts, lessened kinship in its associations, lessened centrality in its references. *Bright* could do much of its work in suggesting value. With the increased quantity of *bright* and its aesthetic kind came increased interest in scene and quality, increased pictorializing of heaven, earth, and the mind, increased carrying by figure of outward material inward instead of the reverse process of the Elizabethans, increased sensory specification and even sensory statement of ethical judgment. So quantity in the major poetic terms of a few representative poets indicates in concentrated form how gradually out of the Elizabethan era, by way of Milton and Collins, to our nineteenth-century predecessors, beauty came to be truth, truth beauty.

In this belief, and by its consequent technique of poetic expression, I think we still abide. But in our time perhaps another major change in vision and medium is due. As Milton searched for and Collins found a better word than *good*, so Keats searched for and we may find a brighter word than *bright*.

It is my guess that the great poetic value words of a century from now will be abstract ones; if not *good* or *true*, then others. But in the meantime we should perhaps expect to find our brighter words in further refinements of *bright* itself, in colors, textures, qualities increasingly significant of inner spirit. By such particularizing, man may require the natural world to serve the human in a new sense, not as foreign, analogical, inspiring, antagonistic, or suitable, but as his own materialization, in the sense and structure of projective symbol. Such
an inversion, which will share with dream and fantasy their vivid sensory and obscure relational projections, may seem drastic, but it is perhaps not so very violent a reaction to the outer scenic dominances of the past three centuries. It will perhaps do men and poets good to make worldly and celestial landscapes subserve for a while a human spirit more humane, and with responsibilities.

At any rate, the present stage of poetry shares with earlier stages the pattern of equilibrium, reaction, and innovation which epithets, as partially representative of the whole poetic activity, seem to reveal. In epitheting we can see, and through it we can surmise, the intense conservatism of poets in the range and variety of their material, the strong agreements of poets in any one time with respect to major structures and references, and the directive growth through time of certain modes of poetry. Today we are at a stage which has broken with the past, yet uses it. The modern prime epithets differ strongly from the Elizabethan or the seventeenth-century standard great, fair, true, from Spenser’s sad and Milton’s happy. They are largely post-1740 terms, in strong agreement with the deep, green, bright, long, dim, young of the century from Collins to Hopkins and Whitman. Dear and fair and sweet, the words of affection, they have discarded, yet good and old, in new contexts of human ambiguity, they have partly preserved. As a whole they are more like each other, Yeats, Eliot, Auden, Crane, Stevens, Thomas, than like the poets of other centuries. Yet within the agreement they split, back toward their poetic allegiances to Donne or Milton, to Elizabeth or Victoria. And at the same time, they experiment in difference: Eliot toward atmospheres, Thomas toward anatomies, Stevens and Auden toward abstractions. Time is a stabilizing force for poetry, it seems, unifying language and its significances; yet it is also a force toward reminiscence, and toward prophecy. So dry and old and windy, young and white, green and certain, well may reminisce and prophesy.

Not only adjective kind and context, but also adjective quantity and class help make plainer some of the relative stabilities in poetic language and human thought. We have noted that the emphasis on participial modifiers has been characteristic of just those poets who
used most epithets, and most sensory epithets: Milton, Collins, Keats, Hopkins, Whitman. We have seen such emphasis grow; so that now participial (especially active) adjectives and sensory adjectives are both modern characteristics, even among poets who subdue adjective use in other forms. At the same time, we have seen that the strong repetition of a few major terms, rather than wide variety, and the use of many indefinite and number particles as rational and colloquial, tend to accompany adjective subordination, as in Wyatt, Donne, Pope, Yeats, Eliot. These are the poets with problems to be spoken. And it is notable that, after a space of many years, some moderns, without surrendering their once opposing sensory emphases, have taken up the devices of the reasoning tradition to make the curious blend of sense and abstract and structural logic by which we may define the modern: the sensory involutions of old and dry and white, in the logical involutions of some and all.

Quantity, as well as category, serves to show how the force of change is softened by stages of general agreement, and by compromise and combination. The twelve-in-ten-line frequency of Spenser, recurring as if by measure, in the mid-centuries of Milton, of Collins, of Keats, of Whitman and Crane, does provide with its regularly accompanying devices and references a sort of steady norm. But, further, we can see it alter: its substrata developing in Pope, its freest and fullest eighteenth-century range, its extremes of thickness and thinness in such individuals as Whitman and Housman, its moderating in the early twentieth century. In the time of Collins and Keats the regular frequency seems surest; in Elizabethan and present time the gap is wider between extremes. So quantity, too, may have a power to define time as well as trend; for the differences between major men are not so great in one time as another, and the norm of eleven in ten for the eighteenth century is a norm of nine in ten for the Elizabethans and for us.

In other, and concluding, words, some of the pattern of English poetry, broad, varied, complex as it is, comes clear to view through its means of modification. The quantity, the quality, the context of adjectives provide indeed a steady pattern within the pattern. English poetry
in its full character is the greatest of mysteries not only to the honest reader but also to the honest poet, and I think there is a pleasure for either in discerning some lines of agreement and continuity. The study of the mere major adjectives of some representative major poets serves such discernment both in general and in particular. In general, it helps to propose and support certain hypotheses concerning poetry. In particular, it helps to propose and support certain hypotheses concerning some of the literal material and function of that poetry.

We see the conservatism of poetry, which takes into the store of its fullest usage by its major poets only some forty epithets in four hundred years. Yet we see the individuality of poetry, which contains in those forty epithets many of the most singularly idiosyncratic or inventive terms of individual poets. We see the temporal bonds of poetry, the strong agreements in usage at one time; yet we see also the temperamental bonds in the forming and growth of kinds or schools, persistent in certain likenesses of device from century to century in a style of thought and speech. And we see the one-way motion of poetry, the accumulation of traits in a general direction, each reaction or return less, and the whole drifting or progressing in a vaguely definable, though wide and wavering, line which renews the past and intensifies the present and introduces the future.

We see, specifically, a core of English poetry the unit of which is the five-beat, one-epithet iambic line, the poetry of Pope and Wordsworth among others, at its center. We see the deviation of Wyatt, Donne, Poe, Tennyson, Housman, Eliot, on the one hand; of Spenser, Quarles, Milton, Thomson, Collins, Keats, Whitman, Crane, on the other, their adjectival quantities, devices, kinds, richer, more various, more sensory. We see marked across these continuing lines the sections of the centuries: early seventeenth figures, early eighteenth and nineteenth images, early twentieth symbols; sixteenth-century court, seventeenth-century cosmos, eighteenth-century pageant, nineteenth-century inner landscape, twentieth-century color in abstraction. We see through these varieties the steadfast abundance of the mere forty major terms in all their force of agreement in use by two dozen major poets, the good and great and new and old, the bad and last and little
and poor and dead, the fading dear and fair, happy and sad and true and sweet, the increasing white, gold, green, blue, red, dry, young, and the components of bright, the shine of the participle in -ing.

We see at their poles two kinds of poets. One talks, the other portrays. One reasons, the other narrates. One relates, the other modifies. And at their poles we have two kinds of periods in poetry. The Elizabethan treats of human relationships in terms of human relationships, against a background thought of universe and time. The modern treats of men in universe and time in terms of the data of sense. And the two are historically joined by the great scenic century which drew men and landscape first into outward pageantry and thence into inward vision, by the pictorial connections which adjectives can best contrive.

For Wyatt and Donne there was little literal poetic acquaintance with the world of sense images. For Spenser and Milton, allegorical tapestry began to be abundant literary scene. Slowly in Pope and swiftly in Collins grew the poetic text of dark grove and green field, and that text Keats carried into the byways of the mind, Whitman and Crane expanded to the ranges of a striving human reach. Now that with such modern intensification of sense the epithet strain has lessened, the line may turn to the moderating abstractions of human relations in a way new to us, enriched from Wyatt's human wars of love by the cosmic reach and qualitative intensity of our poetry's centuries of epithet.
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