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'Bolts of Melody'

The Poetic Meter and Form
in Poetry of Emily Dickinson

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Abstract

This essay analyses a selection of poems written by the American poet Emily Dickinson. The essay aims to explore the function of the meter in Emily Dickinson's poetry. Earlier studies have combined Emily Dickinson's poetry with meter, but the research of metrical pattern and form has not been sufficient enough to show Emily Dickinson's full potential with the different meters. The purpose of this essay is to analyse how the metrical patterns are used by the poet as metrical strategies to impact the reader's perception. One assumption is that structure and form are fundamental to her writing style. It justifies the reading of her poetry in relation to meter. The main focus was the physical structures of the poems, such as line length, metrical patterns, and systematic rhymes. The second most important aim was to analyse her other poetic devices, such as dashes and capitalizations. The findings were analysed together with the vocabulary and figurative language. The analysis shows Emily Dickinson's poetic artistry in meter and rhyme and clarifies how she creates poetry with lyrical qualities. The result is important because it also shows that she can create poetry with metrical patterns, without in that sense being bound to meter.

Keywords: Emily Dickinson, poetry, poems, metrical patterns, rhymes, figurative language, poetic devices.

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Introduction

The metrical pattern is a literary device within prosody and refers to how the poet uses sequences of patterns to create rhythm in their poetic work. As a literary technique, prosody is the study of meter and its uses in verse. As a part of modern literary criticism, it is also concerned with the sounds of poetry and its connection to the natural sound of language (Gross, par. 1). Metrical patterns are used to create rhythm in a piece of poetry and are therefore considered a structural element of poetry (Gross, par. 2). In metrical poetry, the rhythm is organised to follow a pattern created by stressed and unstressed syllables. The metrical pattern has an impact on how the literary piece is interpreted by the reader of the lyrics. This essay will analyse the metrical patterns of poetry and poetic form in five selected poems by Emily Dickinson. The selected poems were written between 1850-1863 by Emily Dickinson and are chosen for their different lyrical qualities. The essay aims to show the depth of Emily Dickinson's skills as a poet, and how she deliberately uses meter and rhyme in her poetry to convey a deeper meaning in her literary work. This essay will therefore examine the different meters, line lengths, poetic forms, and other techniques in the selected poems to show how they affect the reading of the poem.

Poetry may be defined as a concentrated form of literature that with a few carefully chosen words can carry a great deal of meaning. The form is determined by the length of the line and the line-breaks. A line-break marks the end of one line, and the beginning of another. In this way, a poet can decide the poem's appearance on paper. Poetic elements such as line-length and line-breaks together with punctuations, capitalizations, and word positions can enhance the over-all meaning of the poem. Line-breaks can change the pace in a poem. In this way, a poem can speed up or slowdown in pace. It can interrupt itself or insert a breathing pause before it continues at its normal pace. The reader is therefore guided by the lines, the line-breaks, and the stanzas when reading and interpreting poetry.

In English poetry, the lines gain their rhythmical structure by the variation of unstressed and stressed syllables (Fabb and Halle 3). English verse is often written in iambs with two syllables or in anapest with three syllables. Stress-counting meters are common in stress-timed languages such as the English language (Lethbridge and Mildorf 146). That is to say, the language in which the poem is written will also impact the perception of the poetry since the patterns are similar to the patterns of natural speech. In spoken English, the stressed syllables occur in regular intervals, and

unstressed syllables are shortened to fit into its rhythm (Conlen 2). Pronunciation and meter must match, otherwise the reading will sound unnatural. By carefully selecting the words that will be pronounced more fully, the interpretation of the poem can be controlled by the poet. Previous researchers conclude that Emily Dickinson's poetry can with advantage be read out loud since the rhythm has a direct tie to the meaning of her poems (Hubbard 16).

Even though earlier studies have combined Emily Dickinson's poetry with meter, the research of metrical pattern and form has not been sufficient enough to show Emily Dickinson's poetic skills. The purpose of this essay is to analyse how the metrical patterns are used by the poet as metrical strategies to impact the reader's perception. One assumption is that structure and form are fundamental to her writing style, which justifies the reading of her poetry in relation to meter. As a basis for the analysis of the poems, *Meter in Poetry: a New Theory* (2008) by Nigel Fabb and Morris Halle and *Basics of English Studies: an Introductory Course for Students of Literary Studies in English* (2004) by Stefanie Lethbridge and Jarmila Mildorf, are used. The analysis of the selected poems will lead to a conclusion about the main findings.

Background

Emily Dickinson is considered one of the most original and influential poets of all time. She has contributed some of the most memorable lines in American poetry, and her poetry has had a mayor influence on American literature. She is known to challenge the existing approach to the poetry of her time because she uses her own style in poetry instead of the existing poetic tradition (Koss 4). Most of Emily Dickinson's poems are written in short lines and with short stanzas (Koss 3). She is also known for putting special emphasis on certain words within her poetry by using dashes and capitalizations of interior words, that is, words that are not written at the beginning of a sentence. This has become a characteristic of her writing style. Her poetry is considered "sceneless" and exempted from both time and space (Hubbard 117). In other words, her poems provide little information about their context.

Emily Dickinson was born on December 10, 1830. She grew up in the family home called the Homestead in Amherst, Massachusetts, and she lived most of her life in utmost privacy. She attended Amherst district school and Amherst Academy before she left her home for a year of college studies (Koss 4). She was educated in botany, geology, Latin, mental and moral philosophy (Hubbard 3). Emily Dickinson's lifetime

overlaps with a milestone in American literary history as well, the Civil War. She died in 1886, at the age of 55 years old. During her lifetime, Emily Dickinson wrote nearly 1800 poems. She only published a few of those, and they were printed anonymously (Koss 7). The remaining poems were left for the world to discover, after her death.

In the manuscripts that were found after Emily Dickinson's death, many poems came in different variants with alternative words or line-breaks (Hubbard 20). Since the different variants were hard to date precisely, it has been hard to determine some of the poems' final forms. In some poems, whole lines or even stanzas had been replaced (Hubbard 20). In 1950, several decades after Emily Dickinson's death, Harvard University bought the rights to her work. The first edition of Emily Dickinson's collected poetry was published in 1955 by Thomas H. Johnson (Koss 7). There have been many later editions of Emily Dickinson's poetry, but scholars have argued whether these publications have presented her poetry in a rightful way or not (Hubbard 15). They argue that the later editions may have altered Emily Dickinson's original punctuations, capitalizations, dashes, and line-breaks to fit into different schools and traditions of poetry (Hubbard 15). Therefore, it is considered problematic that Emily Dickinson did not publish the poems during her lifetime.

The most reliable publication now available to the public is *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* (1998) by R.W Franklin (Koss 7). The poems in Franklin's edition are numbered in the supposed order of composition. The numbers in this edition are important to help distinguish between Emily Dickinson's poems because she hardly ever wrote titles for her poems. Untitled poems have often been named after their first line in the first stanza. This essay uses the poems published in R.W. Franklin's edition from 1998 for the analysis.

Introduction to the theory of poetic meter and rhyme

The structure of the poem alters the reader's perception of the text. Within the variation in poetry, there are variations of both metrical poetry and non-metrical poetry. Metrical poetry is poetry written in meter and must follow certain rules for line length based on the location of marked syllables. Non-metrical poetry has irregular patterns and does not follow the rules that metrical poetry does. One example is the rule for line breaks. This variation in poetry is free in its shape and sound, but there are various possibilities for metrical poetry too. But even non-metrical poetry must have some kind of syntactic parallelism to classify as poetry (Fabb and Halle 1). There must be some

kind of repetition in part of the lines, at least. The technique is used to create emphasis for the idea that the poet is trying to convey.

There are some essential characteristics of metrical verse that are important to recognize in an analysis. Metrical poetry has patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. Another essential characteristic of metrical verse is that each line of the poem must be of approximately the same length. The lines must have a definite rhythm, which is defined by the length of the line and stressed syllables. Line length is measured by the procedure of grouping syllables, and groups of syllables are called feet. It is the difference between syllables that creates a pattern in the metrical line. A poet must therefore select the sequence of pattern to compose metrical poetry. But the metrical pattern is not a well-formed line of syllables chosen by the poet. The poetic meter has specified sets of rules, and they are often licensed by a poetic school or tradition (Fabb and Halle 11).

The possibilities for metrical patterns in poetry are numerous. This essay will focus on the syllabic patterns of iambic meter that are considered typical for Emily Dickinson's poetry (Gillespie 1). She is known to write her poetry mostly in iambic trimeter and tetrameter (Gillespie 1). One iamb is a metrical foot with two syllables with the rhythmic pattern of one unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable. Each line in iambic meter consists of one or more iambs. The lines are named after the numbers of feet they contain.

1 foot	monometer
2 feet	dimeter
3 feet	trimeter
4 feet	tetrameter
5 feet	pentameter
6 feet	hexameter

(Lethbridge and Mildorf 149)

To identify the meter of a line, one must combine the stress pattern and the number of stresses per line. For example, a line written in iambic tetrameter has four feet with stress on the second syllable. An iambic trimeter has three feet with stress on the second syllable. The most common meter in English poetry is considered the iambic pentameter. The standard iambic pentameter has five iambic feet.

Considering the rhythm of the iambic, a standard iambic pentameter will sound like ‘da-Dum da-Dum da-Dum da-Dum da-Dum’. In the example, the stress is on every second syllable, which becomes more pronounced. However, additional syllables are allowed in the iambic base but only if they are non-stressed. An extra syllable that is non-stressed does not change the base since it does not give any additional stress that changes the rhythm.

- * /- */- * / - * / - * / - *	Iambic Hexameter
- * /- */- * / - * / - *	Iambic Pentameter
- * /- */- * / - *	Iambic Tetrameter
- * /- */- *	Iambic Trimeter

(Gillespie 2)

By most poetic traditions, poetic form is defined by specific meters that alternates in a specific order (Fabb and Halle 3). A poetic meter that strictly alternates between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter is called common meter (Gillespie 2). It has the rhyme scheme ABAB. In poetry written in common meter, there are four-line stanza where the first line rhyme with the third line, and the second with the fourth. Ballad meter is similar to common meter, and they share the same metrical base. However, the ballad meter is not as strict as the common meter, as it can vary in feet and rhyme scheme. All feet do not have to be iambic; there can be an anapest foot with two unstressed syllables before the stressed syllable. However, both are subgroups of the hymn meter, and Emily Dickinson used to write in both of them (Gillespie 2).

An example of a text written in common meter is the well-known song *Amazing Graze*. The verse consists of couplets that alternates between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. As shown in the figure below, the first and the third line have four iambic feet and the second and the fourth line have three iambic feet. The stress is on the second syllable in each unit.

Ama /zing Grace, / how sweet / the <i>sound</i> ,	- * /- */- * / - *
That saved / a wretch / like <i>me</i> !	- * /- */- *
I once / was lost/ but now / am <i>found</i> ,	- * /- */- * / - *
Was blind / but now / I <i>see</i>	- * /- */- *

(Gillespie 2)

Much of the effect in poetry comes from patterns and repetitions, but also from rhymes and rhyme schemes (Lethbridge and Mildorf 162). Common rhymes used in poetry are, for example, perfect rhyme, slant rhyme, eye rhyme, and end rhyme. These are used to create sound patterns. Perfect rhyme, also called rich rhyme, is when the final stressed syllable or vowel and the succeeding consonants are identical in two words or more (Lethbridge and Mildorf 162). The preceding consonant is however different, for example, “cat” and “hat” or “flower” and “power”. If the preceding consonant also is identical, the rhyme is an identical rhyme (Lethbridge and Mildorf 162). For example, “swain” and “twain” or “lap” and “clap”. Slant rhyme, also called half-rhymes, is a type of rhyme with words that have similar or identical consonants but different vowels, or vice versa. This gives the poet some flexibility and an increased range of possibilities for word choice, for example, find and friend. Slant rhymes are closely related to eye rhymes, which is when two words or more are spelled similarly but differ in pronunciation (Lethbridge and Mildorf 163). The most common rhyme in poetry is the end rhyme (Lethbridge and Mildorf 163). It is when two or more lines have end words that rhyme. This function can also be used inside the line and is then called an internal rhyme.

One of the most common ways to write rhymes in poetry is the use of rhyme schemes. Rhyme schemes are composed of end-rhymes that share vowel or consonant sounds. These can be arranged into different patterns that can remain the same or vary throughout the poem (Lethbridge and Mildorf 163). These patterns are often marked with letters, for example, ABAB. The letters indicate the lines that have matching end rhymes in that section of the poem. Even a non-rhyming stanza can be labelled using a new letter for every line, for example, ABCD. Rhyme schemes can help the poets divide their poetry into stanzas. Stanzas are a technique to organize and divide lines in poetry and group them after their purpose. The lines in a stanza often relate to the same or similar purpose. By organizing the stanzas, the poet can build up stages of thematic development or form contrasts within the poem (Lethbridge and Mildorf 163). A poem can therefore have opposites themes, for example, fear and courage.

Rhythm and rhymes are a big part of how poetry sounds, but there are also other sound devices that are important in composing poetry. Alliteration is a repetition of the initial sound of the words, usually a consonant, in a line (Lethbridge and Mildorf 164). The words must be in close proximity but do not necessarily need to follow directly on

each other. If the repetition of a consonant sound occurs within words or at the end of words, the device is called consonance. In case the repetition has a vowel sound, the sound device is called assonance instead (Lethbridge and Mildorf 164). All in all, there are many ways to create sound effects in poetry. Meter, rhymes, and other sound devices are important tools used by the poet to convey meaning.

“Oh the Earth was made for lovers” (1) Emily Dickinson (1850)

The first poem to appear in the 1998-edition of *The Poems of Emily Dickinson* by R.W. Franklin is “Awake Ye Muses Nine, Sing Me A Strain Divine”. However, the poem is more commonly known as “Oh the Earth was made for lovers” after the first line in the second stanza. The whole poem consists of forty lines and twenty rhyming couplets that are divided into two stanzas. However, the first stanza consists of only one couplet and the remaining nineteen couplets belong to the second stanza. This form is unusual for Dickinson’s writing style because her most characteristic poems are written in short lines and short stanzas. All in all, the second stanza consists of thirty-eight lines, and most of the lines lack Dickinson’s other typical characteristics such as dashes and capitalizations. If Dickinson had followed the poetic traditions, the remaining part of the poem would have been divided into quatrains of four lines instead. However, in the last three lines of the poem, there are two dashes and one capitalized inner word.

The metrical lines consist of six feet, which was the standard meter in classic Greek literature such as *The Iliad*. Even if the poem is not divided into quadrants, there is still a pattern to discover. When analysing the body of the poem, one can notice that the majority of the lines are divided after the third feet by a comma. The division creates almost equal halves. Besides that, there are end-rhymes that connect two lines together. The arrangement with end-rhymes enables the reader to come to an end-stop after each rhyming couplet. Even if the poem is not divided into quadrants, the combination of meter and rhyme suggests a division of the poem as we read the verse. Following is a text example from the first stanza. For a full division of the poem, see Appendix A.

◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡
 Awake | ye mus| es nine, | | sing me | a strain | divine, A

◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡ ◡
 Unwind| the sol| emn twine, | | and tie | my Val | entine! A

‘swain’, ‘unity’, and ‘twain’ have this extra stressed syllable. It goes well with the interpretation that all things on earth were made to come together in pairs. In the sixth line, the poet writes that all things ‘go a courting’. This is a verb that describes the situation when a pair is involved romantically with an intention to marry each other. The process is described as taking place on land, in the sea, and in the air.

In addition, Dickinson uses metaphors to make her words come to life in her poem. She starts with the strongest symbol of the bride and the bridegroom, and she describes how the two come together as one. Marriage has also a religious significance. Other strong symbols in the text are Adam and Eve, and the sun and the moon. She uses metaphors to compare one thing with another. It is done both to entertain and to convey her ideas effectively. The only one who has not honoured the ‘unity’ is the man that Dickinson refers to as ‘thee’. The poet claims that it is nonsense of him to be all alone in a world made up of pairs. Dickinson also gives him a piece of advice to stop being solo and instead choose a wife to be happy with. Six ladies are presented as suitable for marriage. The ladies are named Sarah, Eliza, Emeline, Harriet, and Susan. The sixth lady is unnamed and is only called ‘she with curly hair’. However, the man is also unnamed in the poem. The poem could be interpreted as a play with word-pairs, or a matching game of love. The two pronouns ‘he’ and ‘she’ must therefore be most suitable together.

In conclusion, both meter and rhyme work together in this poem and create patterns that reinforce the meaning of the poem. The extra emphasis that the poet usually renders by literary devices such as capitalizations and dashes is here instead fully given to the stressed syllables. If the reader not only reads but listens carefully when reading the poem, a reader can recognize the rhythm and how it is designed for this purpose. Even if the metaphors carry a great deal of meaning, the rhythm and the stressed syllables are all the more important. The meter allows the poet to describe more personal and immediate aspects of love and unity. But of course, Emily Dickinson also uses the vocabulary for this special activity. The arrangement of the end-stops divides the poems into quadrants that are not visible when a reader looks at the poem, but they are noticeable when reading the poem aloud. The poem courts ancient Greece literature just as much as it woos love. It is all these connections created by the poet that reinforce the meaning of the poem.

“Success is counted sweetest” (112) Emily Dickinson (1859)

The next poem, “Success is counted sweetest”, has the short stanzas that are characteristic of Emily Dickinson. It is divided into three stanzas and each stanza is a quadrant with four lines. It is written in ballad meter with the rhyme scheme ABCB, and the lines alternate between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. Therefore, the first line should have four units of two-syllable pairs, and the second line three units of two-syllable pairs. Since the feet are iambic, the first syllable is supposed to be unstressed while the second syllable is stressed. However, the poem does not follow this pattern. Instead, most lines of iambic tetrameter in the poem are missing their final stressed syllable. The first and the third line end with an unstressed syllable and requires another end-word or at least an extra syllable to count as proper iambic tetrameter. The lack of a steady and well-measured meter affects the sound of the poem. When reading the poem aloud, the reader can hear the falling rhythm that is created when the line ends with an unstressed syllable. It is almost like a dropping sound that puts additional emphasis on ‘sweetest’, ‘nectar’, ‘definition’, ‘dying’, and ‘triumph’.

 ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘
 Success | is count | ed sweet | est A

 ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ
 By those | who ne'er | *succeed*. B

 ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘
 To comp | rehend | a nec | tar C

 ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ
 Requi | res sor | est *need*. B

 ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ
 Not one | of all | the pur | ple Host

 ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ
 Who took | the Flag | today

 ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘
 Can tell | the de | finit | ion

 ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ ˘ ˊ
 So clear | of vict | ory

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
 As he | defeat | ed – dy | ing –

 ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
 On whose | forbid | en ear

 ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
 The dist | ant strains | of tri | umph

 ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
 Burst ag| onized | and clear!

(Dickinson 1859)

Contrary to expectations, the second stanza has the only line of complete iambic tetrameter. The word ‘Host’, which also is capitalized, has been granted with additional emphasis. The well-measured iamb makes the line a strong statement in the poem in contrast to the other stanzas. In this way, the tone of the poem changes from a negative tone to a more positive tone. The effect comes from the rising meter. Another advantage is that the line can be read faster, which also captures the reader’s attention since it deviates from the poem’s ordinary pattern.

Other literary devices than meter and rhymes affect the sound of the poem. There are also examples of alliteration, consonance, and assonance in the poem. The first stanza repeats the initial /s/ sound. The words ‘Success’, ‘sweetest’, ‘succeed’, and ‘sores’ are in close proximity even if they do not directly follow each other. Another example is the /n/ sound found in ‘ne’er’, ‘nectar’, and ‘need’. There is also a repetition of the /t/ sound in the second stanza, with ‘took’, ‘today’, and ‘tell’, and a repetition of the /d/ sounds in the last stanza, with ‘defeated’, ‘dying’, and ‘distant’. Consonance is found at the end of the words like ‘success’ and ‘sweetest’, with the repetition of consonant sounds. There are many more examples of this in the verse but also of assonance, for example, the /e/ sound in ‘comprehend’ and ‘nectar’. These poetic sound devices connect words that would not otherwise be connected (Lethbridge and Mildorf 164). The words are spread out within the poem, but the alliteration, consonance, and assonance create a bond between them. Also, the devices create a rhythmic effect since the devices are interior to the poem. The different techniques also emphasize specific words in the poem, and work like a pattern additional to meter that adds meaning and gives the poem a special sound effect.

Another effect of the meter is that it highlights the metaphors in the text. The poem contains several examples of figurative language. In the first stanza, the poet wants to define the meaning of the word 'success'. The idea of 'success' is connected to something sweet, to the nectar in the third line, "To comprehend a nectar" (Dickinson, line 3). Instead of referring to taste in the third line, which should be expected together with the word nectar, the verb is exchanged to "comprehend". The /n/ sound connects the word 'ne'er', 'nectar', and 'need', which implies that the full stanza refers to someone who fails to understand and appreciate the sweetness of success. The second stanza has several military images. The most prominent are the capitalized 'Host' and 'Flag'. The phrase "Not one of all the purple Host" (Dickinson, line 6) and "Who took the Flag today" (Dickinson, line 7) have a figurative way of saying that they won the war. The capitalization of 'Host' and 'Flag' could also symbolize the importance of these words. 'Host' could refer to royalty while the capitalized 'Flag' could symbolize the importance of the victory. The word 'definition' refers to the verb 'comprehend' in the first stanza. It is implied that no one who won the battle, could comprehend the true meaning of victory or success.

The last example of how the poet takes advantage of the meter to express meaning is found in the final stanza. In the line "As he defeated dying" (Dickinson, line 11), the poem changes back to the dropping sound in 'dying' and the mood of the poem changes back to be interpreted as more negative. The minuscule word 'he' is stressed. But this time, the word that carries the stress is not capitalized. This can prove that there is an opposition between the 'Host' and 'he'. The word is followed by the /d/ sounds in 'defeated', 'dying' and 'distant', and the words are strongly connected with 'he'. 'He' only hears the trumpets call for victory away in the distance and their sound bursts painfully for him. This can call for the interpretation that there are two contrasting themes in the poem. One part is victory, and the other part is defeat. The dashes that surround the word '-dying-' put additional emphasis on the personal defeat for the man called 'he'.

Lastly, most of Emily Dickinson's poems are considered to be "sceneless", and this poem could be counted as one of them (Hubbard 117). The poem was written by Dickinson in 1859, but she chose to publish it later during the Civil War. Since she chose to publish her work, she must have found it appropriate for the occasion. Even if the battle scene is quite anonymous in the text, the oppositions of themes could be connected to the time period in which she lived. By reading the poem through its meter,

rhyme, and literary devices, one can notice how the poet has manipulated the meter to emphasize certain words. Dickinson works with assonance and alliterations to create a deeper understanding of the words. In this way, the poet can reach out and touch on problems outside the poem. The way she works with capitalizations and dashes around certain words makes the poem stand out. Yet, her vision in the poem speaks of the surrounding world. The meter in every line enriches the poem and the structure expresses meaning as much as the words themselves do. As the poem expresses contrasts, Dickinson's writing style can also generate diverging interpretations. It can be read as "sceneless", or in close proximity to what happens in the world around her.

"I would not paint – a picture" (348) Emily Dickinson (1862)

The third poem "I would not paint- a picture" is chosen to demonstrate how flexible Emily Dickinson can be when composing poetry with metrical patterns. The poem is divided into three stanzas of eight verses. When analysing the lines, one can see that the meter alternates between three and a half, three, and four feet per line. However, every second line is always three feet so there is a recurring pattern in the poem which has a basic and rhythmic pulse. It is also in these lines that the rhyme scheme is found. There are examples of both slant-rhymes and full end-rhymes like 'One' and 'on' or 'Balloon' and 'Pontoon'.

By analysing the meter used in the first stanza, one can see the pattern repeat itself in the following verses. The first line ends with an unstressed syllable. When reading the first line loud, the reader can hear how the meter rises with the stressed syllable and then falls with the last unstressed syllable. It is almost like the stroke from a painter's brush, a physical movement. The last words '-a picture-' are framed by Dickinson's characteristic dashes. The dashes end the movement of the first line. The second line has a stressed syllable at the end, and that syllable emphasises the word 'One', which also is capitalized. The third line is in contrast to the first line because it contains a full four feet and ends with a stressed syllable. The tone of the last words 'bright impossibility' is, therefore, felt to be more positive because of the last stressed syllable. The fourth line ends with a dash and makes the reader pause for a bit before the verse continues. The stanza could end here, and the poem would then have been divided into quadrants, but the poet has chosen to divide the poem after its thematic content instead. Just like the word 'bright' implies light, the meter has a light and airy feel because of the wording in the following two lines. There are also examples of assonance

in the /e/- and /o-/sounds which lift the rhythm and bring a lyrical effect to the words. The complete analysis of unstressed and stressed syllables in Appendix B.

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
I would | not paint | - a picture –

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
I'd rath | er be | the One

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
It's bright | impos | sibil | ity

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
To dwell | - deli | cious - on –

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
And won | der how | the fin | gers feel

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
Whose rare | - celest | ial - stir –

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
Evokes | so sweet | a torment –

˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
Such sump | tuous | - Despair –

(Dickinson 1862)

The first stanza ends with the word ‘-Despair-’ which is framed with dashes and capitalized. The stanza contains other poetic devices that reinforce the last word. First, there is a repetitive pattern of the consonant /p/ in ‘paint’ and ‘picture’ and it is followed by the consonant /d/ in ‘dwell’ and ‘delicious’. The last word ‘-Despair-’ is preceded by the words ‘sweet’, ‘such’, and ‘sumptuous’. In the line “I’d rather be the One” (Dickinson, line 2), there is an example of assonance in the long /e/ sound. The devices create sound patterns that emphasise specific words that otherwise might not be as noticeable, such as “One”. Due to the assonance and alliterations, it is almost unnecessary for Dickinson to capitalise the last word. The literary devices create the emphasising effect all by themselves.

As mentioned, the poem is divided into three stanzas after their thematic content. The first stanza is dedicated to art and painting, the second stanza to music, and the third stanza to poetry. The voice of the poem is controlled by the ‘I’. In the first stanza, the poet describes how the poetic ‘I’ ponders upon the thought of being the painter or the admirer of someone else’s work of art. ‘I’ explains that he or she rather marvels at

the painting than being the painter herself. The movement of the fingers is described as 'rare' and 'celestial', which shows how highly praised the work of art is considered to be. The second stanza treats the art of music. There are words like 'Cornets' and 'a lip of Metal' that refer directly to musical instruments, but also words that describe feelings of floating like 'Balloon' and 'Pontoon'. 'Cornet' is connected with the verb 'talk' instead of a verb like 'play', which could refer immediately to music. It seems to say that music has other capabilities that can speak to the listener's heart and minds. There are words associated with movement in this stanza also, for example, when the poetic 'I' prefers to be "Raised softly to the Ceilings –" (Dickinson, line 12). But the word 'pontoon' could also have a connection to a floating movement since a pontoon is a kind of boat that keeps itself floating with help of the buoyant force. The buoyant force prevents an object from sinking. The last stanza refers to the art form poetry, and how it is to be a poet. In the first line, one can read that the poetic 'I' does not wish to be a poet. The second line in the stanza says, "It's finer – Own the Ear" (Dickinson line 20). The poet praises the ones who master the ability to read poetry with the inner ear at work. If the poet had followed the earlier pattern, the next line in the third stanza would have contained 'the One'. Instead, 'the One' is exchanged for 'Own the Ear'. The repetition of the vocal sound, together with the capitalized 'O', brings the three stanzas together. The ability to embrace art has been identified by the poetic voice. The reader now knows that it is considered admirable by the poet to be the audience. In conclusion, it brings the reader closer to the poem since the reader now is a part of the poem.

In the last two lines of the poem, the poet brings back the attention to the poetic voice. The poetic 'I' asks itself if one's own art can be interpreted as stunning. The last line, "With Bolts – of Melody!" (Dickinson, line 26), refers to lyrical poetry. One interpretation is that poems are like bolts of melody. The ear is at work when reading poetry, and poetry is designed to be spoken out loud. Dickinson shows this statement with words, and by her actions. It is almost like the poem's structure is designed to come to this conclusion, first by the flexibility in meter that shows how well Dickinson can control rhythmic structures. But she also knows how to break with them by using three, three and a half, and four feet lines. Still, she manages to keep a regular pulse through the poem by keeping the three-feet meter at every second line and combines the metrical pattern with end-rhymes. The sound effect is enforced by alliterations and assonance.

In closing, the interpretation that poems are bolts of melody shares similarities with the thought that a text is poetry if it can be patterned and measured (Fabb and Halle 1). The poem ends with well-measured feet, and the iambic meter is constant. This signals a clear and strong end of the poem. The strong setting at the end to the poem seems to conclude that language and art are important for how human beings think and perceive the world. There are other elements of language that cannot be encoded by grammar and vocabulary alone. The emotional state of an utterance is set by prosody and intonation. Therefore, the metrical pattern adds tone to the poem, something that seems to be appreciated by the poet herself. Since the poem is designed for that statement, the rhythms are even more important.

 ˘ ˘ ˘ ˘
Had I | the Art | to stun | myself

 ˘ ˘ ˘
With Bolts | — of Mel | ody!

(Dickinson 1862)

“Because I could not stop for Death” (479) Emily Dickinson (1862)

“Because I could not stop for Death” is one of Emily Dickinson’s most beloved pieces of poetry. The poem has a well-established pattern of metrical feet. The form alternates between iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter. The regularity establishes an even rhythm, almost equal to heartbeats. The conversational tone could categorize the poem as written in ballad meter. The rhythm puts the stress on words like ‘Death’, ‘me-’, ‘Carriage’, ‘Ourselves – ‘ and ‘Immortality’. Many of the stressed words are also capitalized, with the exception of the pronoun ‘me’. ‘Death’ is personified in this poem, since ‘He’ had the ability to stop the carriage he was driving. The poetic voice follows on the journey with ‘Death’, and their only company on this journey is immortality. The rhythmic meter reflects the motion of the carriage’s journey.

The following stanza follows the same pattern of iambic tetrameter and iambic trimeter, and like the first stanza, it is filled with metaphors. Many of the metaphors are so-called conceptual metaphors. A conceptual metaphor is a figurative metaphor in which one idea, or domain, is understood in terms of another (Lakoff 17). For example, a source domain such as ‘a journey’ is commonly used to explain the target domain of ‘life’, just as ‘departure’ is used to explain ‘death’. Dickinson uses the metaphorical system to take abstract concepts such as life and death and present them as something

more concrete, like objects. She also creates complex metaphors by building them up with simpler metaphors (Alm-Arvius 17). The second stanza contains metaphors for childhood, adulthood, and old age. Together they are a metaphor for life. “We passed the School, where Children strove” and “At recess- in the Ring –“ (Dickinson, line 6 and 7) represent childhood, “We passed the Fields of Grazing Grain –“ (Dickinson, line 8) represent adulthood, and “We passed the Setting Sun –“ (Dickinson, line 9) represent old age. When the carriage ride has passed the last stage of life, it is time to turn toward eternity, which is also the exact phrasing of the last line in the poem. In this poem, Dickinson takes the target domain ‘life’ and presents it as changes in scenery.

The carriage ride goes on at the same pace throughout the first two stanzas, but there is an abrupt change in the third stanza. The poet simply changes the variation order to the opposite. As a result, the line “Or rather - He passed Us-” (Dickinson, line 11) is read faster. This gives the target domain ‘life’ an opportunity to accentuate that ‘life’ can be over so quickly. Death passes the poetic ‘I’ very suddenly and the mood of the poem changes. The warmth that was conveyed in the earlier stanza has now gone away. The sun is going down and the use of the words ‘the Dews’ implies that it is night-time. The feeling is described as ‘quivering’ and ‘Chill –‘ and the ‘gown’ and ‘tippet’ are made of only very thin garments. The last line is written in the shorter trimeter, and the stressed syllable in the line emphasises the word ‘only’, which increases the feeling of coldness that is expressed in the line. This part can also be interpreted as a metaphor since both night and coldness are often used to describe death metaphorically because after death, a body does no longer maintain its temperature. It begins to cool down, below its functioning temperature.

The carriage ride comes to an end in the fourth stanza, and the passenger pauses in front of a house. The house is described as “A swelling of the ground-” (Dickinson, line 17), which implies that the house is below the ground or buried. It is an interesting word choice of the poet to say that it is only a pause. It implies that the house in the swelling ground is not the final destination for the passenger. The last stanza describes how centuries can pass and still each “Feels shorter than the Day” (Dickinson, line 27). If ‘the Day’ is a metaphor for human life, then death can maybe feel like a pause even if it is an eternal afterlife.

In summary, the most prominent part in this poem is how Dickinson uses meter to reflect the motion of the carriage ride and the journey. The poem is filled with metaphors that could be understood in terms of another, and it is a highly cognitive way

to express your ideas as a poet. Dickinson uses her characteristic capitalizations and dashes, and it helps the reader understand the dynamic between ‘He’ and ‘me’ in the poem. Death is personified as a man in this poem, even as a gentleman. The poetic voice of ‘me’ had no initial thought about meeting death right now, but she puts down her labour and her leisure at that very moment to go with him. In this sense it is a simple story which is typical of the ballad meter, together with a steady rhythm, and a conversational tone. A full analysis of the ballad meter is found in Appendix C.

“To know just how he suffered – would be dear” (622) Emily Dickinson (1863)

None of the selected poems that have been discussed so far contain the iambic pentameter, which is the most common meter in English poetry (Fabb and Halle 44). Emily Dickinson is known to prefer the iambic tetrameter and trimeter, but she has written a handful of poems that consist of at least one line of iambic pentameter (**Gillespie 1**). In the last poem in this essay “To know just how he suffered – would be dear”, the dominant meter is the iambic pentameter. Iambic pentameter is a line of ten syllables with a pattern of stressed syllables in even-numbered positions.

There are reasons why iambic pentameter is so popular in traditional English poetry. As mentioned, the English language is a stress-timed language. Because of this, the stressed syllables come in regular intervals just as in the iambic pentameter. In addition, the stressed syllable often falls within a content word which works wonders for poetry. A content word is a word that adds meaning to the sentence. When such words are emphasised by meter or highlighted in any other way, the poem reaches its full potential. Iambic pentameter could also be considered a sound device in poetry. It gives an almost similar result as, for example, assonance (Fabb and Halle 44). In the English language, unstressed syllables are shortened to fit into the rhythm of an utterance (Fabb and Halle 44). In conclusion, the rhythmical structures of iambic pentameter have connections with the natural rhythmic structure of the English language.

Because of its meter, the poem can be read with a conversational tone. When reading out loud, the metrical pattern forces the reader to read it with the same rhythm as natural English speech. The first six lines of the poem feature the pentameter throughout. There are breaks of meter in the following stanzas, but the poem returns frequently to this pace.

“To know | just how | He suff| ered — would | be dear —
 To know | if an | y Hum | an eyes | were near
 To whom | He could | entrust | His wave | ring gaze —
 Until | it sett | le broad | — on Par | adise —
 To know | if He | was pat | ient — part | content —
 Was Dy | ing as | He thought | — or diff | erent —”

(Dickinson 1863)

As usual, the poem has interior words that are capitalized by the poet. In the first stanza, both ‘He’ and ‘Paradise’ are capitalized. The poem can be read as the crucifixion of Christ or more generally like a figurative way to express death. The person, who is referred to as ‘He’, seems to experience the end of his life. ‘He’ is dying. Dying is considered to be one of humanity’s biggest fears, and there were no exceptions during Emily Dickinson’s lifetime. Charles R. Anderson writes in *Emily Dickinson’s Poetry Stairway of Surprise*, that it was common to question death during this time. It was common among ordinary people to believe that a dying person could see God during their passing (Anderson 231). At the same time, people were curious to find out what echoed in a dying person’s mind (Anderson 231).

Other words that are capitalized in the poem are, for example, ‘Home’, ‘God’, ‘Human Nature’, ‘Day’, ‘Everlasting Well’, and ‘Eternity’. Dickinson uses capitalizations to intensify the meaning of the words and to set them apart from other words in the poem. But capitalizations can also be used to express something symbolically. Many, or maybe all, of the capitalized words in this poem seem to have a connection to Christianity. Death is a part of the human experience and nature. ‘Paradise’, ‘Home’, ‘God’, ‘Day’, ‘Everlasting Well’, and ‘Eternity’ imply that it is the Christian’s final home.

The tone of the poem is conversational but still formal. The iambic pentameter belongs to the dominant poetic tradition, and that could also be a reason that Dickinson

chooses this meter for this purpose. The meter could be associated with the dominant role that religion and Christianity played in peoples' life at this time-period. As mentioned, Emily Dickinson has written a few poems with iambic pentameter and all of them have religious and Christian motives. Another example is "After great pain, a formal feeling comes" (372) which also contains the crucifixion of Christ as a metaphor. A conclusion could therefore be that Emily Dickinson uses the iambic pentameter whenever she creates an embodiment of Christ or draws conclusions regarding religion or Christianity in her poetry.

Conclusion

This essay set out to show how Emily Dickinson uses metrical patterns and rhymes in her poetry to affect the reading of her poetry. The thesis was that she deliberately uses meter, line length, poetic form, literary techniques, and sound devices to convey a deeper meaning in her literary work. The focus was set on five different poems to show her width as a poet. What they all had in common were their different lyrical qualities. The main target in the analysis was to set the physical structures within the poems, such as line length, metrical patterns, and systematic rhymes. The second most important aim was to analyse her other poetic devices, for example, dashes and capitalizations. The findings were analysed together with the vocabulary and figurative language in the selected poems, such as personifications and metaphors. The analysis of the poems resulted in a deeper understanding of the selected poems' themes and motives. To some extent, the analysis also touched upon historical or contemporary influences that might have been reflected in Emily Dickinson's poetry.

The analysis has shown that Emily Dickinson can compose poetry with many different lyrical qualities. She pays attention to how the accent falls on content words, capitalizations, and metaphors, and she can use this to her advantage. She can use the meter to describe aspects in her poetry in a more personalized and intimate manner. At the same time, she does not seem to feel bound to the meter. Many critics describe Emily Dickinson's poetry as concentrated lyrics with twists and paradoxes. But the greatest paradox of Emily Dickinson is that structure and form seem to liberate her as an artist rather than bind her. Even then, the technical meter does not make Emily Dickinson's poetry feel less individual or varied. She seems to be liberated from any form. Even though she used them, she had no problem breaking them with additional syllables or half forms. The key seems to be how she breaks the lines in her poetry, and

how she controls and concentrates meaning or movement in her phrasing to succeed with the compactness that characterizes poetry.

A mystery of Emily Dickinson is that her poems were left in different versions after her death. Some poems had alternative lines or completely new stanzas. In that sense, she seems like a poet that is eager to try variation and other aspects. It seems like she has been playing with words to see how much stress can be placed on different words in the alternative layouts. The alternative endings show that Emily Dickinson wanted to master her art. If the inner ear is at work when reading her poetry, one can tell that every part of it has been designed for that purpose.

Another conclusion that can be drawn is that the different manuscripts must be evidence that Emily Dickinson appreciated the relationship between language and thought. The metaphors that build up even more complex metaphors, and her way to express meaning through other literary devices also provide answers that argue for that hypothesis. Her composition of poetry shows that meter is more than just the rhythm of the feet. She can create structures that expressed meaning quite as much as the capitalized word themselves do. These are also reasons why she is considered one of America's finest poets of all times.

The aim of the essay was primarily to analyse the metrical pattern and show Emily Dickinson's artistry in poetry. The conclusion is that Emily Dickinson's poetry is indeed like bolts of melodies, designed to stun their audience with complex thoughts and lyrical qualities.

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Appendix A “Awake Ye Muses Nine, Sing Me A Strain Divine”

Awake | ye mus| es nine, || sing me | a strain | divine, **A**

Unwind| the sol | emn twine, || and tie | my Val | entine! **A**

Oh the Earth | was made | for lovers, | | for dam | sel, and hope | less *swain*, **B**

For sigh | ing, and gen | tle whispering, || and un | ity made | of *twain*. **B**

All things | do go | a courting, || in earth | or sea | or *air*, **C**

God hath | made no | thing single || but thee | in His world | so *fair*! **C**

The bride, | and then | the bridegroom, || the two, | and then | the *One*, **D**

Adam, | and Eve, | his consort, | | the moon, | and then | the sun; **D**

The life | doth prove | the precept, | | who obey | shall hap | py *be*, **E**

Who will | not serve | the sovereign, | | be hang | ed on fat | al tree. **E**

The high | do seek | the lowly, | | the great | do seek | the small, **F**

None can | not find | who seeketh, | | on this | terres | trial ball; **F**

The bee | doth court | the flower, | | the flow | er his | suit receives **G**

And they | make mer | ry wedding, | | whose guests | are hund | red leaves; **G**

The wind | doth woo | the branches, | | the branch | es they | are won, **H**

And the fath | er fond | demandeth | the maid | en for | his son. **H**

Approach | that tree | with caution, | | then up | it bold | ly climb, **R**

And seize | the one | thou lovest, | | nor care | for space, | or time! **R**

Then bear | her to | the greenwood, | | and build | for her | a bower, **S**

And give | her what | she asketh, | | jewel, | or bird, | or flower— **S**

And bring | the fife, | and trumpet, | | and beat | upon | the drum— **T**

And bid | the world | Goodmorrow, | | and go | to glo | ry home! **T**

Appendix B “I would not paint – a picture”

I would | not paint | - a picture –

I'd rath | er be | the One

It's bright | impos | sibil | ity

To dwell | - deli | cious - on –

And won | der how | the fin | gers feel

Whose rare | - celest | ial - stir –

Evokes | so sweet | a torment –

Such sump | tuous | - Despair –

I would | not talk, | like Cornets —

I'd rat | her be | the One

Raised soft | ly to | the Ceilings —

And out, | and ea | sy on —

Through Vil | lages | of Ether —

Myself | endued | Balloon

By but | a lip | of Metal —

The pier | to my | Pontoon —

Nor would | I be | a Poet —

It's fi | ner — Own | the Ear —

Ena | mored | — impo | tent — content —

The Li | cense to | revere,

A pri | vilege | so awful

What would | the Dow | er be,

Had I | the Art | to stun | myself

With Bolts | — of Mel | ody!

Appendix C “Because I could not stop for Death”

Because | I could | not stop | for Death – 8

He kind | ly stopped | for me – 6

The Car | riage held | but just | Ourselves – 8

And Im | morta | lity. 6

We passed | the School, | where Child | ren strove 8

At Rec | ess – in | the Ring – 6

We passed | the Fields | of Gaz | ing Grain – 8

We passed | the Sett | ing Sun – 6

Or rat | her – He | passed Us – 6

The Dews | grew qui | vering | and Chill – 8

For on | ly Gos | samer, | my Gown – 8

My Tip | pet – on | ly Tulle – 6

We paused | before | a House | that seemed 8

A Swell | ing of | the Ground – 6

The Roof | was scarc | ely vis | ible – 8

The Corn | ice – but | a mound – 6

Since then | - 'tis Cent | uries - | and yet 8

Feels short | er than | the Day 6

I first | surmised | the Hors | es' Heads 8

Were toward | Eter | nity - 6