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# MOTION IN (EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY) POETRY

BILL OVERTON

In an essay published over forty years ago, Allan Rodway proposed that, while Romantic poetic modes are “more concerned with *states*,” Augustan poetic modes are more concerned “with *relationships*.” Refining this view near the end of the essay, he linked Romantic and post-Romantic poetry with “evocative imagery,” by which he meant metaphor, and Augustan with “patterns of syntax.”<sup>1</sup> It might be added, although Rodway does not make the point—perhaps because it is scarcely original—that Augustan poetry inclines less to metaphor than to simile. Around the same time, Earl R. Wasserman and William Bowman Piper produced studies of

<sup>1</sup> “By Algebra to Augustanism,” in *Essays on Style and Language*, ed. Roger Fowler (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), 53–67 (55, 66).

Pope's *Windsor-Forest* and the heroic couplet respectively that support Rodway's view. For Wasserman, a poem by Pope is at every level "ideally ordered variety, the agreement of differences."<sup>2</sup> Piper similarly declares that each of Pope's poems is "an attempt to comprehend one element of natural diversity and complexity and to articulate the principles that govern it, the pattern that dwells in it."<sup>3</sup> The implication I wish to draw from Rodway's proposal is rather different. This is that, if Augustan poetry really does tend to focus on relationships, if it is more typically concerned with relations between states than with states in themselves, it is likely to be less capable of representing process or motion.

Much of the evidence for Rodway's view of Augustan poetry comes from the dominance of the closed couplet. This form most often works by playing a vertical tension, produced by the expectation of a terminal rhyme, against a horizontal one, produced by one or more pauses within each of the two lines. One of the most famous examples, often cited and imitated in the eighteenth century, and discussed by Wasserman and Piper, is a couplet from Denham's *Cooper's Hill*:

Though deep, yet clear, though gentle, yet not dull,  
Strong without rage, without ore-flowing full. (191-92)<sup>4</sup>

This has cross-tensions not only between each half-line, but between the terms within each half-line; and also tensions crossing between different parts of the two lines diagonally. It is a perfect example of different ideas held in suspense through such devices as balance, antithesis and chiasmus. Nothing is going anywhere, though it is a river that is being described, because everything is held in place by its opposite or complement. To that extent the couplet can stand on its own, though in context it is of course part of a political and an ideological argument.<sup>5</sup> It is a kind of couplet widely cultivated in the long eighteenth century, and it has a structure that is precisely, in Rodway's terms, to do with relationships. For that reason it would seem much less well adapted for representing motion. To try and test that proposition, I will begin with several examples considered manifestly evocative of motion by critics of the period.

<sup>2</sup> Earl R. Wasserman, *The Subtler Language: Critical Readings of Neoclassic and Romantic Poems* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1959), 142.

<sup>3</sup> William Bowman Piper, *The Heroic Couplet* (Cleveland: Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1969), 146.

<sup>4</sup> *The Poetical Works of Sir John Denham*, 2nd ed., ed. Theodore Howard Banks (Hamden: Archon Books, 1969), 77; Wasserman, *Subtler Language*, 40.

<sup>5</sup> See Wasserman, *Subtler Language*, Chapter III, "Denham: *Cooper's Hill*."

In *The Art of Poetry on a New Plan*, published by John Newbery in 1762, the writer, perhaps Oliver Goldsmith,<sup>6</sup> quotes a passage from Pope's translation of Homer and then introduces a further four lines as follows:

The thought with which [Homer] has described the speed of the celestial coursers is altogether as magnificent. He disdains all comparisons drawn from the wind, hail, whirlwinds and torrents, which he had before apply'd to express the swiftness and impetuosity of his combatants, and to give us an idea of the rapidity of these immortal horses, he measures their strokes, as *Longinus* observes, by the whole breadth of the horizon.<sup>7</sup>

This is Pope's version:

Far as a shepherd, from some Point on high,  
O'er the wide Main extends his boundless Eye,  
Thro' such a Space of Air, with thund'ring Sound,  
At ev'ry Leap th' Immortal Coursers bound.<sup>8</sup> (V, 960–63)

The example bears out Rodway's point, for Pope suggests an idea of speed through spatial relationships. In rendering Homer's simile, he builds it into the structure of his verse by converting the three lines of the original into two couplets, so that the tenor of the comparison is in the first and the vehicle in the second. Furthermore, the relation between the two couplets is chiasitic: the shepherd of the first line is aligned with the coursers of the fourth, and the wide main of the second line is equated with the space of the third. Pope also gives extra pace and energy to the lines by reversing the first feet of the first two, and by providing only a slight pause between the two

<sup>6</sup> For instance, a slightly different version of the same passage occurs in *Essays and Criticisms*, by Dr. Goldsmith, 3 vols. (London, 1798), II, 221.

<sup>7</sup> *The Art of Poetry on a New Plan*, 2 vols. (London, 1762), I, 21–22 (21).

<sup>8</sup> *The Poems of Alexander Pope*, Twickenham Edition, gen. ed. John Butt, 11 vols. (London: Methuen, 1938–68), VII, *The Iliad of Homer: Books I–IX*, ed. Maynard Mack (1967), 312. Chapman's translation of the same lines, in hexameters, makes an instructive comparison for its greater fluidity: "This grace she slackt not, but her horse, scourg'd, that in nature flew / Betwixt the cope of starres and earth: And how farre at a view / A man into the purple Sea, may from a hill descree, / So farre a high-neighing horse of heaven, at euerie iump would flie" (*The Whole Works of Homer; prince of Poetts in his Iliads, and Odyssees* [London: {by Richard Field and William Jaggard} for Nathaniell Butter, 1616], 69 [V, 772–5]).



couplets instead of a firm end-stop.<sup>9</sup> But, in using the verse form to suggest speed, that is as far as he can go without abandoning the heroic couplet. The result is that it is Homer's ideas, as well as Pope can convey them, that do most of the work of representation.<sup>10</sup>

An example from Pope not derived from translation appears in Edward Bysshe's *Art of English Poetry* under the headings "Hounds . . . Hunting."<sup>11</sup> This is from *Windsor-Forest*:

See! the bold Youth strain up the threatenng Steep,  
Rush thro' the Thickets, down the Vallies sweep,  
Hang o'er their Coursers Heads with eager Speed,  
And Earth rolls back beneath the flying Steed.<sup>12</sup> (155-58)

Again there are two couplets, and they work in a similar way to those in the lines from Pope's *Homer*. The key spatial relationships are between steep thickets and valleys in the first couplet, and between rider and ground in the second. And there is a further tension between the two couplets, in that the first takes the spectator's viewpoint, the second the rider's. Both spectator and rider get a sensation of speed from space traversed, between points in the landscape for the one, from seeing the ground go by for the other. Again, too, Pope adds pace and energy with trochaic substitutions—three of the lines begin with emphatic verbs—and repeated sounds, including use of the same vowel in all four rhyme-words.

Both these examples raise the question whether Pope's versification is to any extent mimetic. In an excellent essay entitled "'The Sound Must Seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*': An Eighteenth-Century Controversy Revisited," Richard Terry considers the key arguments in the period over whether or not poetry could be regarded as capable of representational effects.<sup>13</sup> On one side of the controversy is Pope, whose dictum from the *Essay on Criticism*

<sup>9</sup> In the second edition (6 vols.; London, 1720-21), II, 71, the comma after the first couplet is changed to a semicolon, perhaps in pursuit of what Pope considered greater metrical "correctness." The result is to impair slightly the impression of speed.

<sup>10</sup> The title of the chapter in Newbery's *Art of Poetry* in which the passage appears is "Of the Beauty of Thought in Poetry."

<sup>11</sup> It first appears in the sixth edition, 2 vols. (London, 1718), I, 245, and, in the same year, in *The Art of English Poetry, Vol. the IIIrd. and IVth*, 2 vols. (London, 1718), I, 420.

<sup>12</sup> Twickenham Edition, I, *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, ed. E. Audra and Aubrey Williams (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1961), 164.

<sup>13</sup> *Modern Language Review*, 91 (1999): 940-54.

Terry cites in his title; on the other, Samuel Johnson, who scorned most claims to what he called "representative meter."<sup>14</sup> Pope sought to exemplify his view in one of the most famous passages in the *Essay*.<sup>15</sup> In *Rambler* 94, however, Johnson went back to first principles, conceding that "every language which admits of poetry" enables "general resemblance of the sound to the sense," but denying that this will necessarily apply to what he calls "particular images."<sup>16</sup> He went on to claim that on many occasions it is the reader who, as it were, colors these in: "we modulate the poem by our own disposition, and ascribe to the numbers the effects of the sense" (136). Yet, though Johnson cites examples of sound matching sense in Homer, Virgil, Dryden and especially Milton, he suggested that many others are "the product of blind reverence acting upon fancy" (139). In an *Idler* paper over eight years later, he gave entertaining illustrations in the faux-critic Dick Minim's ability to find in passages about a drum and a bubble "striking accommodations of the sound to the sense."<sup>17</sup>

In his *Rambler* essay and his "Life of Pope," Johnson took special exception to Pope's lines from *An Essay on Criticism*. They provide an interesting test case for the whole question, particularly the lines that seek to render the effort in throwing a heavy rock on the one hand, and those that attempt to represent apparently effortless running on the other:

When *Ajax* strives, some Rock's vast Weight to throw,  
The Line too *labours*, and the Words move *slow*;  
Not so, when swift *Camilla* scours the Plain,  
Flies o'er th' unbending Corn, and skims along the Main  
(370-73)

Johnson's first objection is that, in the lines about Ajax, "there is no particular heaviness, obstruction, or delay" (129). This may be rebutted by analyzing

<sup>14</sup> "Pope," in *The Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets; With Critical Observations on Their Works*, ed. and introd. Roger Lonsdale, 4 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon Press), IV, 69. Johnson uses the phrase "representative versification" in "Cowley," *Lives*, I, 233.

<sup>15</sup> *Pastoral Poetry and An Essay on Criticism*, 280-83 (lines 358-73).

<sup>16</sup> *The Rambler*, 3 vols., ed. Walter Jackson Bate and Albrecht B. Strauss (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969), in *The Yale Edition of the Works of Samuel Johnson*, ed. John H. Middelndorf, 16 vols. (1958-90), IV, 129. Subsequent references are given in parentheses in the text.

<sup>17</sup> *Yale Edition*, II, *The Idler and the Adventurer*, ed. Walter Jackson Bate, John M. Bullitt, and L. F. Powell (1963), 189 (No. 61).

their meter and sound patterns. First, to adopt a term from Timothy Steele,<sup>18</sup> there are two heavy iambs in both lines, and in line 270 these are consecutive, producing five heavier stresses in a row. Using a four-term system for analyzing metrical stress rather than the simple binary system of light and heavy, the lines may be analyzed as follows:

When<sup>1</sup> A<sup>4</sup>jax<sup>1</sup> strives<sup>4</sup>, some<sup>3</sup> Rock's<sup>4</sup> vast<sup>3</sup> Weight<sup>4</sup> to<sup>1</sup> throw<sup>4</sup>,  
The<sup>1</sup> Line<sup>4</sup> too<sup>3</sup> la<sup>4</sup>bours<sup>2</sup>, and<sup>3</sup> the<sup>1</sup> Words<sup>4</sup> move<sup>3</sup> slow<sup>4</sup>.

The placing of the caesura in the middle of the second line, so that it occurs between the second syllable of the verb “labours” and the conjunction “and,” so producing an unexpected heavier stress on the latter, also produces a halting effect. Second, there is only one word of more than a single syllable in each line, “Ajax” and “labours.” The monosyllables are difficult to pronounce quickly and so too, because neither coincides with a metrical foot, are the two disyllables. Third, the line emphasizing the weight of the rocks contains a lot of thick consonants and consonantal compounds, especially “str” and “thr,” and the line emphasizing the labor of lifting the rocks contains no fewer than seven long and only three short vowels.

As Johnson concedes, the second couplet works partly through contrast with the first, but his other main objection is that its second line, because it has an extra foot, cannot express speed. Here he relies on the difference between classical quantitative meter and English accentual-syllabic meter, arguing that English has no equivalent for the classical dactyl, in which the sum of the second two syllables, which are short, is equal to the first, which is long. Again, though, a more accurate metrical analysis of Pope's line suggests that it does help to evoke rapid motion. The key point is that both lines begin with a near-spondee and are then regularly iambic, producing an effect of initial delay followed by release:

Not<sup>3</sup> so<sup>4</sup>, when<sup>1</sup> swift<sup>4</sup> Ca<sup>1</sup>mill<sup>4</sup>a<sup>1</sup> scours<sup>4</sup> the<sup>1</sup> Plain<sup>4</sup>,  
Flies<sup>3</sup> o'er<sup>4</sup> th' un<sup>1</sup>bend<sup>4</sup>ing<sup>1</sup> Corn<sup>4</sup>, and<sup>1</sup> skims<sup>4</sup> a<sup>1</sup>long<sup>4</sup> the<sup>1</sup> Main<sup>4</sup>.

Although it may seem illogical, as it did to Johnson, that a longer line can suggest speed, the second one does just that because its texture and structure enable it to be pronounced more quickly than, for example, either of the two

<sup>18</sup> *All the Fun's in How You Say a Thing: An Explanation of Meter and Versification* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1999), 34–36, and the contextual discussion, 28–39.

describing Ajax lifting his rock. A case in point is the difference in the length of time it takes to say "rock's vast weight" and "Camilla." Although there are three syllables in both the phrase and the name, the name runs off the tongue much more easily. Similarly, although most of the words in the second couplet are, as in the first, monosyllabic, two of the three exceptions, "Camilla" and "unbending," have three syllables. This tends to quicken the pace of reading, an effect heightened by the fact that, like most of the vowels in the couplet, fewer than a third of which are long,<sup>19</sup> all the vowels in both words are short. In the same way, analysis of the consonants indicates that, unlike in the previous couplet, not only does none retard the line but the combinations of liquids in "Camilla scours," and "Flies o'er" help to accelerate it. Other aural and metrical effects that tend to speed the line up are the assonance of "swift Camilla," the consonance of "o'er th' unbending Corn," and the placing of the caesura, which in the first line produces a series of eight syllables without a pause, and divides the second into two unbroken series of six syllables each.

Johnson's later objection, in his "Life of Pope," is on similar grounds and may similarly be answered. Although it would be redundant to address it here, it is important to recognize that there is validity in his position, at least as far as what may be called Dick Minimisms are concerned. First, strictly speaking, poetry can imitate few nonverbal phenomena. Instead, it is more accurate to speak of evocation or suggestion. For this reason the phrase used by Richard Terry, "sound enactment," is unsuitable.<sup>20</sup> Second, it certainly is easy to read in effects that cannot be confirmed by metrical or phonological evidence. It is up to those who evaluate the evidence to determine how convincing it is.

The examples I have discussed so far have all been from verse in closed couplets. But, though many other examples could be given, the characteristics of this form limit its capacity for suggesting motion in ways I have tried to explain. In particular, because the closed couplet is based on relatively short units of sense, lines in this form suggesting various kinds of motion rarely extend beyond four. This is radically unlike the more extensive sequences in pre- and post-Augustan verse, for instance Wordsworth's *Prelude* or Milton's *Paradise Lost*. Here is an example in which Milton describes Satan's flight:

At last his Sail-broad Vannes  
He spread for flight, and in the surging smোক

<sup>19</sup> I count 15 short, 7 long.

<sup>20</sup> "The Sound Must Seem an *Eccho* to the *Sense*," 940 and passim.

Uplifted spurns the ground, thence many a League  
 As in a cloudy Chair ascending *rides*  
*Audacious*, but that seat soon failing, *meets*  
*A vast vacuity*: all unawares  
 Fluttring his pennons vain plumb *down he drops*  
*Ten thousand fadom deep*, and *to this hour*  
*Down had been falling*, had not by ill chance  
 The strong rebuff of som tumultuous cloud  
 Instinct with Fire and Nitre *hurried him*  
*As many miles aloft*.<sup>21</sup> (II, 927-38)

The most obvious metrical feature here is the unbroken series of eleven run-on lines. But this is not the only device by which Milton suggests falling. First, he varies the position of the caesura. Counting phrasal boundaries not marked by punctuation, the caesura occurs conventionally after the second or third foot in nine of the twelve lines; but there are two striking pauses in the fifth line, and another in the ninth, in all cases emphasized by punctuation and the division of a metrical foot ("Audacious, but," "failing, meets," "falling, had").<sup>22</sup> The effect is first of movement up, and then movement down, checked suddenly. It is the falling movement that is emphasized most, in keeping with a motif fundamental to the whole poem, especially in the lines beginning "all unawares." This is accentuated further by a second device, trochaic substitutions, as in lines 932 ("all un-"), 933 ("Fluttring"), 934 ("and to") and 935 ("Down had"). Not only do these appear in consecutive lines, but each occurs at one of two emphatic points, either at the start of a line or after a firm caesura. There are also emphatic heavy iambs at the start of line 934 ("Ten thou-") and at the end of line 935 ("ill chance"), and subtle plays on sound, such as ending four consecutive lines in this series with "s," the thudding "d" in "down he drops \* Ten thousand fadom deep," and, a few words later, and also straddling two lines, the striking assonance of "hour \* Down."

The power and subtlety with which, through his use of blank verse, Milton suggests Satan's motion here is not available in closed couplets. Perhaps more surprisingly, it is also rarely if ever achieved in eighteenth-century blank verse until Wordsworth. The reason for this is that, as Richard Bradford has

<sup>21</sup> John Milton, *Paradise Lost. A Poem in Twelve Books*, 2nd edition (London, 1674).

<sup>22</sup> For a study of how Milton uses punctuation, see Mindele Treip, *Milton's Punctuation and Changing English Usage, 1582-1676* ([London]: Methuen, 1970).

shown, blank verse was influenced not only by the closed couplet—most obviously, for instance, in Young's *Night Thoughts*—but also by a concern for the integrity of the line stemming from the fact that, by definition, it has no rhyme to mark its ending.<sup>23</sup> Bradford gives several examples from Thomson's *Seasons* in order to show this. Here is another, from the final version of "Winter":

Meantime the Mountain-Billows, to the Clouds  
In dreadful Tumult swell'd, Surge above Surge,  
Burst into Chaos with tremendous Roar,  
And anchor'd Navies from their Stations drive,  
Wild as the Winds across the howling Waste  
Of mighty Waters: now th' inflated Wave  
Straining they scale, and now impetuous shoot  
Into the secret Chambers of the Deep,  
The wintry *Baltick* thundering o'er their Head.<sup>24</sup> (161–69)

Though this sequence contains four run-on lines, three of them consecutive, though two lines end and one begins with powerfully expressive verbs, and though trochaic substitutions begin the third, fifth and seventh lines, the effects are on a smaller scale from those in *Paradise Lost*. This is partly because there are more pauses, partly because Thomson varies the position of the caesura less than Milton, and partly because there are fewer surprises. The connective "Meantime" at the start shows the poet's arranging hand, and enjambments do little to unsettle expectation: of course the clouds are in tumult, and the ships shoot into the deep. Nowhere is the blank verse of *The Seasons* as vigorous and dynamic as that of *Paradise Lost*. As Bradford remarks, "Even where interlineal variation is employed by eighteenth-century blank versifiers it always creates a far more controlled, subdued and predictable effect than will be found in Milton."<sup>25</sup> Thomson's language is also more heavily adjectival, and the extent to which his lines focus on spatial relationships, especially vertical ones—between sea and clouds, and surface and deeps—is in keeping with Rodway's point about the characteristic tendency of eighteenth-century poetry.

<sup>23</sup> Richard Bradford, *Augustan Measures: Restoration and Eighteenth-Century Writings on Prosody and Meter* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2002).

<sup>24</sup> James Thomson, *The Seasons*, ed. James Sambrook (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), 210.

<sup>25</sup> Bradford, *Augustan Measures*, 204.

Because it is less daring with enjambment than Milton, eighteenth-century blank verse more characteristically highlights arrest than speed. In *The Fleece*, for instance, Dyer writes:

With easy course  
The vessels glide; unless their speed be stopp'd  
By dead calms, that oft lie on those smooth<sup>3</sup> seas<sup>4</sup>  
While ev'ry zephyr sleeps: then the shrouds<sup>3</sup> drop<sup>4</sup>:  
The downy feather, on the cordage hung,  
Moves not; the flat sea shines like yellow gold,  
Fus'd in the fire; or like the marble floor  
Of some old temple wide.<sup>26</sup> (IV, 249–56)

What is striking here is the trochaic substitution early in line 251 ("calms, that"), a foot that is also divided by a caesura; the use of heavy iambs at the ends of lines 251 and 252; and the strong end-stopping of line 252 in combination with its half-rhyme with line 250. All this helps suggest the cessation of motion.

To find examples of eighteenth-century verse suggesting motion of a more dramatic kind, it is necessary to look beyond blank verse and the closed couplet to other forms. One of the most rhythmic meters in English is the anapestic. Not only do the two lighter stresses in each foot easily suggest quick movement, suited especially to dance or song, but, through contrast, they give the heavier stress greater emphasis. In the eighteenth century the form was often employed for humorous purposes, as a few lines from Elizabeth Carter's "A Dialogue" will illustrate. The poem is an allegory that begins with Body accusing Mind of neglecting her duties:

The best room in my house you have seized for your own,  
And turned the whole tenement quite upside down,  
While you hourly call in a disorderly crew  
Of vagabond rogues, who have nothing to do  
But to run in and out, hurry-scurry, and keep  
Such a horrible uproar, I can't get to sleep.<sup>27</sup> (7–12)

<sup>26</sup> *Poetical Works of John Dyer* (London: s. n., 1765), 98.

<sup>27</sup> *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets: An Oxford Anthology*, ed. Roger Lonsdale (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 168.

Here Carter exploits the buoyant rhythm and three consecutive run-on lines to suggest rowdy, incessant motion. As the poem goes on, its humorous tone provides a cover for her to raise subversive questions about the relation not only of body to mind but also husband to wife, and the legitimacy of women's intellectual interests. While Carter's poem is in the most common stanza form for anapestic meter in the eighteenth century, tetrameter couplets, Eliza Day achieved rather different effects with her unusual trimeter quatrains rhymed alternately. She provides, for example, a lively account in what is certainly, to use Johnson's phrase, representative meter, of a painfully rough journey in the Alps by unsprung charabanc:

Such twistings and jerkings there were,  
     Predetermined to heartily bump us;  
 Zig-zag, like a dog in a fair,  
     To all the four points of the compass.<sup>28</sup> (21–25)

The shortening of the line to trimeter, instead of the more usual tetrameter, suits it to such jerky rhythms, and, in common with other writers of anapestic verse at the period, including Carter elsewhere in her poem, Day heightens the humor with hypermetrical end-of-line light stresses and comic double rhymes.

Women writers also produced two more daring rhythmic experiments. Mary Robinson chose the very unusual form of trochaic tetrameter quatrains for her "Stanzas. Written between Dover and Calais, in July, 1792," a poem that suggests the motion of the sea as well as the turbulence of her feelings. It begins:

Bounding Billow, cease thy motion;  
     Bear me not so swiftly o'er!  
 Cease thy roaring, foamy Ocean!  
     I will tempt thy rage no more.<sup>29</sup> (1–4)

Because trochaic feet have a falling movement, the stress dropping from heavier to lighter, they are well suited to such effects. While most trochaic verse in English is catalectic—meaning that the final light stress is omitted—Robinson maintains the falling movement by not truncating the odd-numbered lines. She emphasizes the rhythm further through alliteration on

<sup>28</sup> *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, 496.

<sup>29</sup> *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, 471.



"b" in the first two lines, and patterns of assonance such as "foamy Ocean," and "o'er" \* "roar" - \* "more." Even more striking, though completely different in its effects, is the stanza form devised by Elizabeth Amherst for "The Welford Wedding." This poem was written not for publication but for the amusement of family, friends, and, presumably, wedding guests. It consists of eight ten-line stanzas, each followed by the first four lines repeated as a chorus. The first stanza should give some idea of how it suggests the high spirits of a country dance:

Susan and Charlotte and Letty and all  
 Jump and skip and caper and brawl,  
 Frisk in the drawing-room, romp in the hall,  
 Susan and Charlotte and Letty and all.  
 Hark! the fiddle each gay spirit moves;  
 See, the beaux have all drawn on their gloves.  
     Mr. Archer will dance,  
     And Jack Hobland will prance,  
     And Jack Shirley'll advance,  
     If my Lady approves.

*Chorus:* Susan and Charlotte and Letty and all &c.<sup>30</sup> (1-11)

It is difficult to imagine a rhythm that could better express the rollicking motion of a jig. Technically, each stanza begins with four lines of dactylic tetrameter catalectic, but with some trochaic variations; these four lines rhyme with each other, including the fourth repeating the first. This unit of four lines then becomes the chorus for the rest of the poem. The remaining six lines begin with two in the same form, rhyming together, but then four in anapestic dimeter, the first three of which rhyme with each other but the fourth with the first two dactylic trimeters before the refrain returns. Though she does not indicate how she scans it, Margaret Anne Doody goes so far as to call the poem "one of the era's most sophisticated and entertaining examples of manipulation of verse form in relation to sound," and this is probably not to praise it too highly.<sup>31</sup>

It does not seem a coincidence that, within the eighteenth century, it was women poets not writing in Augustan traditions who were able most effectively to evoke motion. Equally, it is no surprise that it became easier,

<sup>30</sup> *Eighteenth-Century Women Poets*, 181.

<sup>31</sup> "Women Poets of the Eighteenth Century," in *Women and Literature in Britain 1700-1800*, ed. Vivien Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 229.

perhaps also more necessary, for poets to suggest motion as older assumptions rooted in order and hierarchy gave way. Such developments would require other ways of writing verse and other prosodies—but that would require a longer essay than this one, and along with it, even more risk of running into Dick Minimisms.