

H.D.'S "OREAD": A LINGUISTIC APPROACH*

Sigrîd Renaux
UFPR

RESUMO

Este trabalho faz uma leitura do poema "Oread", da fase imagista de H.D., através do modelo proposto por G. Leech. Partindo-se do nível lingüístico da Realização (gráfico e fonológico), atinge-se em seguida o nível da Forma (morfológico e sintático) e depois o nível Semântico (significado denotativo ou cognitivo), para em seguida acrescentar-se um nível simbólico, a fim de se atingir a Significação Total do poema. Conclusão: a concentração de expressão revelada, atesta mais uma vez a unidade lírica entre forma e significado.

Whirl up, sea —
whirl your pointed pines,
splash your great pines
on our rocks,
hurl your green over us,
cover us with your pools of fir.¹

Examining this poem in parts which correspond to the various levels of organization of language,² our linguistic description will search for systems of equivalence and of opposition inside each level and then try, after a hierarchic survey, to integrate the different levels which make possible the explanation of a process of meaning. These delimitations cannot be too rigorous, because when examining one level, we are bound to refer to the others³ at the same time. The analysis will also move from a technical to an impressionistic level, as we are dealing with poetry.

* This analysis is a chapter of *Word, image and symbol in H.D.'s early nature poetry*, M.A. thesis presented at the University of São Paulo in December 1974.

1. DOOLITTLE, H. *Collected poems*. New York. Liveright Publ., 1925, p. 81.

2. LEECH, G.N. *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. London. Longman, 1969, p. 37-8.

3. LEECH, p. 37-8.

Starting on the *Level of Realization*, A. Bieli's opinion that "every word is first of all a sound: the very first victory of conscience lies in the creation of sonorous symbols"⁴ will be most pertinent to apply to "Oread", as the examining of the sounds of the poem will reveal.

The vocalic texture of "Oread" is characterized by the contrasting of accented vowels of different heights, plus two rising diphthongs, thus forming a subtle pattern:

/i/ in "sea", "green";
 /ɔ/ in "pointed";
 /aI/ in "pines";
 /ae/ in "splash";
 /u/ in "pools";
 /e/ in "great";
 /a/ in "rocks", "cover";
 /ə/ in "whirl", "hurl", "fir", "your".

This interplay of high and low vowels in such a short poem creates a richness of texture which is even more enhanced by the resonance — "the most important value of the poetic language"⁵ — of the consonant pattern, which presents some striking aspects:

Line one: *Whirl up, sea* —

"Whirl" is an onomatopoeic word with its rolling sound, which, reinforced by the liquid /l/ at the end, gives an effect of continuity to its meaning. The final position of the plosive /p/ in "up", followed by a comma, brings the impressions caused by "whirl" to an abrupt stop, reminding us of a wave at its highest point before breaking down. This impression is reinforced by the word "sea", with its long /i/ preceded by the fricative /s/, which makes the rhythm of the line slow down.

Line two: *whirl your pointed pines*

Here, the repetition of "whirl" is emphasized by "your", which has again the rolling /ə/ repeated ten times in the poem (plus the /r/ in initial or middle position repeated four times), thus serving to convey the surging of the sea in its continual revolving motion. The alliteration of "pointed pines", with the plosive in initial position, brings the words closer together not only in sound — /pointed paɪnz/ — but also in meaning, thus connecting them in their sense, as if

4 POMORSKA, K. *Formalismo e futurismo*. São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1972. p. 85.

5 We have chosen the unstressed form of "your", according to the KENYON'S and KNOTT's A pronouncing dictionary of American English. Springfield, Merriam, 1963. p. 20.

6 POMORSKA, K. *Formalismo e Futurismo*. São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1972. p. 100

7 JAKOBSON, R. *Linguistics and poetics*. In: SEBEOK, T.A., ed. *Style in Language*. Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1960. p. 371.

"pines" had "pointed" as an inherent quality. As Jakobson says, "words similar in sound are drawn together in meaning".⁷

Line three: *splash your great pines*

Just like "whirl" and "hurl", "splash" is onomatopoeic, imitating natural sounds, i.e., conveying sense through sound. Both "whirl" and "hurl" reinforce the general feeling of a rapid circular movement, reminding us of the eternal surging movement of water, while "splash", with its low and "open" /ae/, conveys a maximum in loudness. The abrupt onset of "splash" followed by its smooth decline echoes a wave that breaks on a rock and then spreads out in all directions, thus standing in sharp contrast to the centrifugal movement conveyed by "whirl", for the impact of "splash" is much greater than, and is a consequence of, the act of whirling. The /r/ in "great", although not foregrounded, adds to the general rolling sound pattern in the poem.

Line four: *on our rocks,*

Graphically, the words "our rocks" form a chiasmus, just as in the line before, "pointed pines" formed an acrostic repetition of letters, for the letters of "pine" are contained in the word "pointed". This visual similarity also adds to our auditory experience, for "on our rocks" is pronounced as one continuum, with only a stop in the plosive /k/ which, together with the final fricative /s/ in "rocks", conveys to us by its "hardness", the hardness of a rock, in contrast with the fluidity of the other lines.

Line five: *hurl your green over us,*

"Hurl", like "whirl" is another forceful word, onomatopoeic in its effect, and its sound similarity with "whirl" (/hw ʔl/ - /h ʔ l/), plus their morphological similarity, again gives external significance to it, for its imitative effect of throwing something up and over us conveys the same forcefulness of "whirl". "Green" alliterates with "great", forming a parallelism in sound and in meaning, for both words refer to the sea. In the same way, "sea" and "green", with the same vowel /i/, become associated in sound and in meaning (their colour). "Hurl your green over", with its great incidence of /ʔ/ plus /r/, again reminds us of the rolling movement of the sea.

Line six: *cover us with your pools of fir.*

"Cover" is the last verb which, by its sound similarity to "whirl" and "hurl" — the same /ʔ/ in its unstressed syllable and by its denoting a complete motion of extending over, transmits again the motion of the sea. "Pools of fir", with the lower intensity of the liquid /l/ and the semi-vowel

/r/, plus the "dark" vowels /u/ (high) and /ə/ (central), suggests, by the "softness" of its final voiced consonants, the liquid quality of water in its near-silence and stillness, after having formed its "pools of fir". On the other hand, the same /ə/ found at the beginning and at the end of the poem in "whirl" and "fir", again unites these two words by their similarity in sound, as if the pronouncing of "fir" would immediately take us back to the first line, forming a new beginning. This circular movement is more than apparent in the verb "whirl" — an extension of meaning to the form of the poem. "Cover us" is phonologically similar to "over us" in the line before, while graphically, the parallelism is even more striking, for the letters of "over" are inside "cover", thus producing a parallelism also in meaning: to cover = to hurl over. "Cover" and "rocks" graphically form a chiasmus, which, together with other visual effects such as those mentioned above, plus the graphic similarity of "whirl/hurl", "your/our", "cover/over", "green/great", could be referred to as semantically related by their "poetic etymologies", thus giving great strength and unity and compactness to the poem.

One could still mention the effect achieved by the fricatives /s/, /ʃ/ and /z/ intermingled in the lines, suggesting, by their "hissing" and continuant sound, the waves rolling out into "pools of fir". But by far the most foregrounded phonological elements are the liquid /l/ and the semi-vowel /r/, either isolated or combined, as in "whirl", "hurl":

- | | |
|--|-----------------|
| line 1. <i>whirl</i> up, sea — | /l/ |
| 2. <i>whirl</i> <i>your</i> pointed pines, | /ə l/ |
| 3. <i>spash</i> <i>your</i> great pines | /ə r/ |
| 4. on our rocks, | /r/ /r/ |
| 5. <i>hurl</i> <i>your</i> green over us, | /ə/ /ə/ /r/ /ə/ |
| 6. cover us with <i>your</i> pools of fir. | /ə/ /ə/ /l/ /ə/ |

The lower intensity of these sounds (either the liquid /l/ or the semi-vowel /r/) spread throughout the poem, emphasizes the intensity of the vowels, which, according to Jakobson⁸, have far higher power than the consonants.

Thus, one could even speak of a rhyme pattern in the echoing /ə/ which governs the whole poem, exerting an onomatopoeic function from "whirl up" to "fir" and which corroborates the idea of the continual movement of the sea, seminal to the theme of the poem. The diversity of the "colour" of vowels also reminds us of the different shades of the green sea, in this monochromatic picture of water. On the other

8 JAKOBSON, R. *Preliminaries to speech analysis*. Cambridge, M.I.T. Press, 1963. p. 20.

hand, the poem's appeal to synesthesia, i.e., the connection between the auditory, tactile and visual responses, combines with the tempestuous mood of the message. Thus, the whole phonological scheme, as a poetic device, could serve to present the variety and richness of the sounds of a thundering sea, not only by the accumulation of liquids and fricatives, by onomatopoeic effects of verbs, but also by alliterative and consonantal effects, in this way again making "sound enact sense".⁹

Rhyme effects are also obtained by sound parallelism, in initial or final position, if we understand rhyme as a "return of corresponding sounds". Reference could also be made to the fact that all the lines, except line three, are end-stopped, which makes each syntactic unit a complete image of the sea, while the trochaic beginning of each line (except line four) adds to the prominent initial position of the verbs.

As to rhythm and intonation, "Oread" is written in free verse. By definition, free verse is

a pattern of verse structure without meter and usually without rhyme (...) but within its formlessness it tends toward regularity (...). The voice of free verse seemed to challenge the arbitrary, mechanical use of meter, and to focus attention on the evocative value of words¹⁰.

This same challenge is taken up by H.D., for, instead of the mechanical use of meter, she strove with the other Imagists to attain the French Symbolists' "subtleties of cadence"¹¹. This confirms the second precept of the Imagist credo, "to create new rhythms — as the expression of new moods", usually using free verse¹². In "Oread", the rhythm is a perfect replica of the surging movement of waves, with its flowing quality enhanced by liquids and semivowels (/l/ and /r/), and its time compass independent of the number of syllables: there is a slow increase in speed, from the halting rhythm of the first line to the continuity of lines three and four, ending again with a slowing down in the last line.

9 LEECH, p. 99. According to Krystyna POMOROSKA, this concentration on poetry as music is an inherited trait from French symbolists who considered sound "the most important value of poetic language" (p. 76).

10 SHIPLEY, J.T., ed. *Dictionary of world literary terms*. London, Allen & Unwin, 1970. p. 132.

11 The Imagists, in "trying to attain in English certain subtleties of cadence of the kind which Mallarmé and his followers have studied in French", were, of course, influenced by French Symbolist poetry as to its free-verse form. BOGAN, L. *Achievement in American poetry, 1900-1950*. Chicago, H. Regnery, 1951. p.39, quoting Harriet Monroe.

12 *SOME Imagist poets; an anthology*. New York, Kraus Reprint, 1969. p. vi-vii.

Intonation shows us a similar effect of smaller and greater waves spreading out, after having "whirled up":

- line 1. Whirl up, sea —
 2. whirl your pointed pines,
 3. splash your great pines
 4. on our rocks,
 5. hurl your green over us.
 6. cover us with your pools of fir¹³.

The rising-falling intonation of these lines, besides conveying to us the movement of waves, is also an important factor in shaping the poem's rhythm, for an internal pause coincides with the falling intonation, thus grouping words read with practically the same speed as an isolated word:

- | | | | |
|--------------------|---|-------------------------|---|
| line 1. Whirl up, | / | sea — | / |
| 2. whirl | / | your pointed pines, | / |
| 3. splash | / | your great pines | / |
| 4. on our rocks | / | | / |
| 5. hurl your green | / | over us, | / |
| 6. cover us | / | with your pools of fir. | / |

(The "rallentado" in the last coincides with the diminishing of sound, which contrasts with the waking up motion of the first line).

This confirms Sapir's impression that "in some of the more artistic products of the imagist school (...) there was present a tendency to a rhythm of time pulses that operated independently (...) of the number of syllables". This would allow "the metrical 'irregularity' of one type of free verse (...) to be interpreted as a merely optical but not fundamentally auditory irregularity", for "a line of verse (...) [can] be looked upon as the exact prosodic equivalent of a line of perhaps but half its length".¹⁴ Line one is a perfect example of this "conscience of rhythm": the word "sea", with a single strong accent, preceded by a pause and followed by an exceptionally long pause, besides bringing out this section

13 L.DANIELS also gives us a very suggestive graphic rendering of the poem in *The art of reading poetry* (New York, Farrar & Rinehart, 1941. p. 195-9): line 1 2 3 4 5 6 .

14 SAPIR, E. The musical foundations of verse. *Journal of English and Germanic Philology*, 20(2):213, 1921. Sapir also comments further on about the very high rhythmical degree of the lines in "Oread".

as if the addresser paused for a moment before continuing his invocation to the sea, is the prosodic equivalent of any of the other long sections in the poem. This would serve to foreground the word "sea" phonologically in relation to the other sections, which will also be confirmed at the other linguistic levels.

Ossip Brik's opinion that "the rhythmic impulse comes before verse"¹⁵ corroborates Sapir's view that poetic rhythm springs from the essentially rhythmical nature of language: the free verse lines of "Oread" seem to have been created in one rhythmic impulse, joining form and meaning in the rhythmic-syntactic complex which constitutes poetic language.

Before examining the level of Form, it is necessary to refer to the Oriental influence on Imagist poems¹⁶ in order to apprehend the total meaning of the poem. "Oread", like H.D.'s "The Pool", resembles Japanese poetry not only in its lineation but also in length: for example, the "tanka" (which has thirty-one syllables), the "naganta", the "haiku". "Oread" has almost the same number of syllables as the "tanka" (twenty-nine) and coincidentally the "tanka" deals with similar subjects — on the level Semantics — to those found in H.D.'s early poetry: the four seasons (Nature), affections, elegies, allegories. Sanetomo's "kinkai-shu", in French translation, gives us a very similar image of a stormy sea:

Du vaste Océan
sur la grève en grondant
vagues qui déferlent
se divisent et se brisent
se déchirent séparent¹⁷.

One sees how the pictographic aspect of both poems is very intense, thus making the physical impact of the lines very sharp and clear. As M. Nanny says, commenting on Pound's poetry, "the 'mundus intelligibilis' of Aristotle has been replaced by the 'mundus sensibilis' (...) of modern science"; thus Pound's belief in the importance of "poetry as picture" has made him turn to "visual perception" to "render the par-

15 BRIK, O. Ritmo e sintaxe. In: LEMON, L.T. & REIS, M.J., ed. Teoria da literatura: formalistas russos. Porto Alegre, Globo, 1971, p. 132.

16 As to the more remote Oriental influence on Imagism, it came through translations of Chinese and Japanese poetry into French, and through the work of the Boston Orientalist Ernest Fenollosa. The Japanese "haiku", which developed in the seventeenth century, consists of seventeen syllables in (three lines of five, seven, and five syllables) and is a complete poem in itself, concerned mainly with a season of the year, i.e., presenting nature images.

17 SANETOMO, M.N. Le Kinkai-shu. Change, Paris, 1970, p. 149.

ticularized facts of reality most adequately in his poetry". One sees how H.D., Pound's "disciple", is more concerned "with the outward appearance of things"¹⁸, for the concentrated form of "Oread" brings out each word in the lines, making them visually prominent, while the intermingling of shorter with longer lines of verse reminds us of waves, each one different from the other in length.

At the *Level of Form* (grammar and lexicon), there is a symmetry in the number of verbs (five), prepositions (five), first possessive pronouns (five), adjectives (two), objective pronouns (two), plus a preponderance of nouns (seven): this regularity in a way compensates for the "irregularity" of free verse, for one can find "order" in the poem in its morphological aspect. Some words, furthermore, are repeated, thus emphasizing them even more, in such a small poem.

Although there is a predominance of concrete nouns in the poem, which brings forward the poem's viscosity in terms of image, shape, and colour, these nouns are actually "subordinated" to the verbs, the great "energy-givers" of speech¹⁹. Besides giving mobility to the nouns, by conveying the movement of waves, of great pines moving in the winds, they occupy the first place in all the lines of the poem (except line four, which refers to "rocks"). This initial position of the verbs, making the rest of the words in each line become an extension of the movement of verbs (imparted at the Phonological level by their onomatopoeic effect) is actually demanded by their imperative mood.

The poem is made up of five simple imperative sentences, which concentrate on presenting one powerful image of the sea by their interrelatedness and parallelistic effects in sound, form, and meaning. According to Samuel Levin²⁰, any linguistic analysis of poetry must deal with the syntagmatic level, but paradigms are equally important, since certain structures in poems are more apprehensible when the poem is considered not merely as a succession of syntagms, but also of paradigms. Thus, grouping the words in each sentence into paradigms, and then into syntagms, we would have the following schemes:

18 NAENNY, M. Ezra Pound's visual poetry and the method of science. *English Studies*, 43(5):462, Oct. 1962.

19 POMORSKA, quoting Humboldt: "Humboldt long ago observed that the element which gives speech its energy is the verb" (p. 68-9).

20 LEVIN, S. *Linguistic structures in poetry*. The Hague. Mouton. 1962. p. 19 ff.

<i>Paradigm:</i>	<i>Paradigm:</i>	<i>Paradigm:</i>
whirl up	sea	
whirl	your pointed pines	on our rocks
splash	your great pines	over us
hurl	your green	
cover with	your pools of fir	us

On the syntagmatic level, the groups of words form a recurrent pattern if we classify them as Noun Phrase (NP), Verbal Phrase (VP) and Adverbial Phrase (AP):

Whirl up (VP), sea (NP) —

whirl (VP) your pointed pines (NP),

splash (VP) your great pines (NP)

on our rocks (AP),

hurl (VP) your green (NP) over us (AP),

cover (VP) us (NP) with your pools of fir (AP)

VP NP
VP NP
VP NP
AP
VP NP AP
VP NP AP

One pattern would be formed by the first three lines (VP NP) and a second pattern by the last two lines of the poem (VP NP AP) with line four as the differentiating element, formed by an AP only (although syntactically it is a continuation of line three, a "run-on" line): this would again project "on our rocks" as the only line which syntactically has not the same syntagmatic construction as the others, as semantically it has the only noun that does not metaphorically refer to the sea; it is the only static line in contrast with the movement in the others, reinforcing the opposition "rocks" versus "sea". Phonologically, it is also the only line in which there are no great vocalic contrasts as in the other lines, in which the different vowels and consonant clusters evoked the sounds and movement of the sea.

Again, the equilibrium between the five Verbal Phrases and the five Noun Phrases, plus the three Adverbial Phrases, proves that an internal order can be found in free verse²¹. Coming back to Levin, the parallelistic effects obtained on the syntagmatic and paradigmatic levels are called by him "poetic coupling" when accompanied by parallelism in sound:

21 Or, in ELIOT's words, "no vers is libre for the man who wants to lo a good job". Quoted by W.PRATT. *The imagist poem*. New York, E.P. Dutton, 1963. p. 26.

whirl up, sea —	<i>Parallelism:</i>
whirl your pointed pines	in sound and meaning
whirl your pointed pines splash your great pines	in sound, form and meaning
on our rocks over us cover us	in sound and meaning
hurl your green over us cover us with your pools of fir	in sound and meaning

All these effects are again theorized by Jakobson, for whom "a difference in grammatical concepts does not necessarily represent a difference in the state of affairs referred to (...). The recurrent 'figure of grammar' (...) is particularly palpable in those poetic forms, where contiguous metrical units are more or less consistently combined through a grammatical parallelism into pairs or (optionally), triplets"²². And, referring to the poem, one can say with Jakobson (who is quoting Sapir) that its five sentences "are really the same fundamental sentence, differing only in their material trappings"²³.

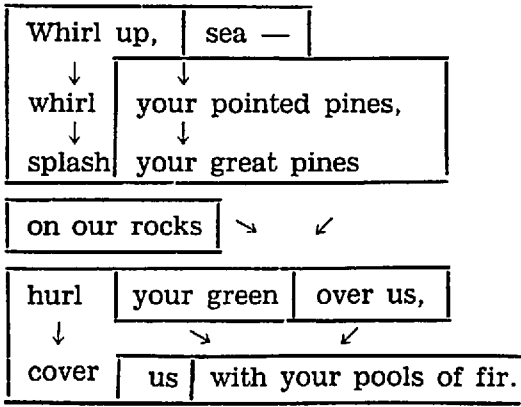
But we can even go a step further in examining H.D.'s syntactic patterns, if we apply to them Zolkowskij's theory of amplification²⁴, entering thus the *Level of Semantics*: for him, a work of art is made up of fragments of reality, like a complex amplifier which acts on the consciousness of the reader. Amplification is a necessary and substantial condition in a work of art, for it gives us a means of filling in the abyss between form and content, because it represents at the same time the procedure and the aesthetic result. Applying these concepts to "Oread", one sees that amplification is patent not only in the repetition of one of the members of a line or of a similar idea or image in the next line, but it is also shown in the fact that the first line contains the basic

22 JAKOBSON, R. Poesia da gramática e gramática da poesia. In: ————. *Linguística. Poética. Cinema*. São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1970. p. 65-80.

23 JAKOBSON, R. Gramática..., p. 80.

24 ZOLKOWSKIJ, A.K. Del amplificazione. In: FACCANI, R. & ECO, U. *I sistemi di segni e lo strutturalismo sovietico*. Milano, Bompiani, s.d. p. 91 ff.

theme of the poem, which is then amplified through metaphors up to the end of the poem:



Thus, one sees how line one contains, in implicit form, the rest of the poem: the power of the sea and the poet's approval of that power; but we do not know how these elements are going to be developed until the relation of poet to sea is explicitly amplified by the constructions "hurl your green over us" and "cover us".

In order to examine some aspects at the Level of Semantics, one could start by grouping the nouns and verbs according to their "semantic features" or "sèmes"²⁵ into two groups:

1. Nouns indicating green colour: sea, pines, green, pools, fir. (This would leave only "rocks" outside this group, thus foregrounding it in relation to the others, just as at the Level of Realization, it was the only line following an "enjambement". But another group could also be formed with "rocks" and "us", which have "solidity" as a common semantic feature, and the fact that both belong to the earth and will be covered by water).
2. Verbs indicating movement: whirl up, whirl, splash, hurl, cover.

25 DUCROT, O. & TODOROV, T. *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage*. Paris, seull. 1972. p. 339-40. Applying to the domain of meaning the method of communication the phonologists apply to the domain of sound. Pottier and Greimas speak of "sèmes", which correspond to "semantic features", and the search of these units is called "analyse sémique" or "componentielle". Here, the analysis is only concerned with lexical elements (morphemes or words, lexèmes for Pottier) and for this reason the "semantic features" are discussed at the level of form.

Thus, the five verbs convey to us the same idea of the movement of the sea, either a centrifugal or a spreading out movement, or up and over, ending with a complete covering of everything. The nouns, except "rocks", are all metaphors for the sea, all of them possessing the same moving quality that waves have, which is increased by the verbs in front of them. "Rocks" would be again the contrasting element, the only "immovable" noun in the poem (plus "us"), if we consider the pronoun as substituting "poet" or "reader", as it is the only noun that does not refer specifically to the sea, but to the earth. Again, the nouns referring to the sea are all preceded by the first possessive pronoun "your" ("pines", "green", "pools of fir"), while "rocks" is the only noun preceded by the first possessive pronoun "our", it belongs to "us", to the addressee and to the reader. The descriptive function of "great" and the expressive function of "pointed" add size and shape to "pines", while at the same time conveying the image of great and pointed waves.

Therefore, the words in the poem "at once name things and manifest a substantial and enduring subject which projects all things"²⁶, which is the "Ur-form of experience": "sea" and "pines" become fused not only in "green", but also in the "pools of fir" complex, in which the first element relates to water, the second to pines; and the onomatopoeic effect of the verbs again binds their sound and sense to the motion of the sea, forming one extended metaphor.

After having realized that the correspondences found at the Levels of Realization, Form and Semantics are such, that one cannot think of their having occurred accidentally, for, as Jakobson states,

any significant poetic composition, be it an improvisation, be it the fruit of a long and hard work of creativity, implies a choice of the verbal material, a choice orientated in a certain way²⁷,

we shall now examine the symbolism each word carries inside itself. In this manner, new means of apprehending the Total Significance of the poem shall be searched for, to enrich the denotative or cognitive meaning of the text.

The specific Greek title, "Oread", means a mountain and cave nymph. Homeric mythology represents nymphs as goddesses of a rank inferior to the Olympian divinities; they are

26 RIDDEL, J.N. H.D. and the poetics of 'Spiritual Realism'. *Contemporary Literature*, 10(4):456, 1969.

27 JAKOBSON, R. Configuração verbal subliminar em poesia. In: ————. *Linguística. Poética. Cinema*, p. 82.

the daughters of Jupiter, who inhabit the Earth in groves, mountains, rivers, prairies²⁸. Besides, Jung considers nymphs as "aspects of the feminine character of the unconscious" and says that the "regio nymphidica" of Paracelsus is "related to the notions of temptation, transitoriness (...) dissolution"²⁹. The ancient Greeks' understanding of natural phenomena as having supernatural powers and of nymphs being the personification of certain forces in nature is seminal for the grasping of the relationship established between the Oread and the sea.

The first line presents, through one extended metaphor, the theme of the poem: a mountain nymph's plea to the waters to whirl up and "cover us". The sea, as symbol of "moving waters" (here reinforced by "whirl up") and as mediator between life and death, is considered thus as the fountain of life and the end of it; to "return to the sea" is like "returning to the mother", to die³⁰. (This part of the symbolism will become relevant to the final interpretation of the poem, together with Jung's theories about nymphs). Besides, "whirl up" reminds us not only of the centrifugal, spinning movement of the sea, but also of the force of water in "whirlpool". The animistic metaphor, developed in the other lines of the poem, presents to us its "tenor"³¹ in the word "sea", while in the following lines the "vehicles" of the metaphor: pines, green, pools of fir; and the "ground" of the comparison would lie in the likeness that tenor and vehicles have as to form, colour, and even sound.

Line two, by identifying waves with "pointed pines", brings to our mind not only the close visual resemblance of pines growing close together with a series of wave tops in a stormy sea but also makes us think of the undulatory aspect of a mountain range, covered with pine trees. T.B. Swann even mentions one interpretation of "Oread" according to which "the poem compares mountains to sea, rather than the other way around"³². Poetic language, begun in the line before by the nymph's address to the sea, continues here with the synaesthetic appeal of the metaphor, for "pointed pines" calls attention not only to our sense of sight, but also brings, in the rapid movement from sea to pines, a suggestion of quick, dizzy movement through space like the whirling of the water upward.

28 ROBLES, F.C.S. *Ensayo de un diccionario mitológico universal*. Madrid, Aguilar, 1958. p. 519-20.

29 CIRLOT, J.E. *Diccionario de símbolos*. Barcelona, Labor, 1969. p. 337.

30 CIRLOT, p. 310.

31 LEECH, p. 151.

32 SWANN, T.B. *The classical world of H.D.* Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1962. p. 25.

Line three brings in a new element, "splash", in the same way as line two brought "pointed pines" as a new element in contrast to the repetition of "whirl". "Splash", an onomatopoeic verb, seems to be the natural consequence of whirling up, like rain is the consequence of thunder. It makes us pause for a moment, as if to hear its impact on the rocks, before the whirling and hurling movement of the waves starts again: this pause is corroborated on the Level of Realization in that "splash" is the only verb which has no echoing /ə/ while on the Level of Form, it is the only run-on line, its meaning is only complete when we reach "on our rocks"; this again confirms the feeling of pause by the solidity and hardness connoted by "rocks". If "pointed" in line two appealed briefly to our visual and tactile perceptions, the adjective "great" is associated not only with physical size but also with a feeling of awe and respect, with a connotative quality of nobleness, power and mystery which the sea — also a god, to whom a female nature spirit is speaking — conveys. Therefore, the external quality of the waves as "pointed" is complemented with "great", both an external and an intrinsic quality of the sea. The metaphor "sea/pines", here repeated, becomes even more relevant when we remember that the pine tree, like other evergreen trees, is a symbol of immortality — besides being a holy tree³³ — which can be associated with the sea symbolism, as the beginning and end of life. But one cannot forget that in nature, certain pines are very hardy trees, able to withstand the sea and salt air, which might be in relation to their being "immortal" trees.

Line four implies a rockbound shore, with huge and hard rocks to withstand the fury of the sea. As the only static element in the poem, "rocks" contrasts with all the other nouns in the poem, related metaphorically to the sea, and thus implying fluidity and movement. This contrast was already referred to, when seeing the phonological aspects of the poem, as having no great difference in its vowel texture in counterpoint to the other lines; syntactically, as being the only verbless line; semantically, as belonging to a different paradigmatic group. One could even say that "rocks" with its implicit symbolism of permanence, solidity and solidarity with itself³⁴ is a gauge by which to measure the fluidness and mobility of the metaphorical effect "waves/pines". On the other hand, "our", which precedes "rocks", makes the latter stand in contrast to all the other nouns "possessed"

33 CIRLOT, p. 376.

34 CIRLOT, p. 401.

by the sea (meaning not only the nymph or the poet speaking through her, but referring to humanity in general): "your pointed pines", "your great pines", "your green", "your pools of fir". Thus, the two paradigmatic orders of nouns, "sea" versus "rocks", are even further contrasted by the first possessive pronouns in front of them: "your" versus "our" and "us" (objective pronoun). The phrase "our rocks" would again confirm, in this way, the identification of the Oread as basically a land spirit, in contrast to the sea.

Line five continues the contrast begun in the line before, between "sea" and "our rocks", for here it is the idea of green pine trees and leaping green waves fused spontaneously in the noun "green" (brought about by the earlier association "sea/pines") which is presented as being hurled, thrown violently over the addresser, with "us", like "our", again implying a fusion of the lyric "I" with the reader. Although the Oread is commanding the sea to action, she is actually passive, static as the rocks, suffering the action of the sea as "doer" (which reminds us of Jung's words above), to "hurl" its "green over us". Green, in the theory of correspondences, refers to water.

Finally, line six completes the series of imperatives to the sea begun in line one, while at the same time completing the series of actions "performed" by the sea: after whirling up, splashing, and hurling, the verb "cover", with its all embracing sense, seems to fuse all the other lines into this last one. In other words, verbs dominate the first five lines of the poem with their movement, just as Coffman's comment that "the comparison of the waves to fir trees gives not only pictorial outline, but color, a suggestion of coolness, softness, hushed sound, and even, perhaps, of fragrance"³⁵ in a way seems to find a "restful" element in the last line of the poem, in "pools of fir"; thus, after all that movement and violence, completion is attained, identification with the wildness of nature is achieved through a complete drowning of our senses in the "pools of fir". Tenor and vehicle of the metaphor seem to have become fused into one, in "pools of fir", already mentioned as related both to "sea", "green" and "pines". The image is now completed, for after having been called to life, the sea has surged up onto the rocks, spreading out and growing quiet again³⁶. Moreover, this complex "pools of fir" merges sea and land with the sea dominant, yet it also limits

35 COFFMAN JR., S. *Imagism, a chapter for the history of modern poetry*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1951. p. 148.

36 Pound's words: "the point of Imagism is that it does not use images as ornaments. The image itself is the speech" apply particularly well to this poem. Quoted by PRATT, p. 29.

the sea to something smaller and less powerful — pools — so that in effect both sea and land have been changed by their merger. "Pools of fir", in which the symbolism behind the words "water" and "pine tree" becomes apparent again, takes us back to ideas of death and rebirth: as immersion in water means a return to the preformal, with the double meaning of death, dissolution and rebirth³⁷, it also reminds us of water as a symbol of the collective unconscious³⁸. Both these symbolisms are once more related to Jung's opinion of the meaning of nymphs, thus making the whole metaphor "sea/pines" take us back to the addresser, for her plea to be covered by the sea is a wish to return to the preformal, to be dissolved in the waters, "the beginning and end of all earthly things"³⁹.

In a somewhat far-fetched interpretation, which is nevertheless corroborated by modern critics of H.D., the poet's death wish through the words of an Oread would point not only to the "feminine character of the unconscious" but also to H.D.'s need to "escape inwardness to merge either with the mother, the eternal subjectivity, the sea (or mer-mère, a verbal relationship she herself suggests (...)) or to attain a permanence, the hardness of male objectivity or of Freud's artifacts"⁴⁰.

Bachelard offers us still a different interpretation. For him, violent water is not feminine, but masculine: "L'eau prend un racine, elle change de sexe. En devenant méchante, elle devient masculine"⁴¹. Although in "Oread" the sea is not "méchante", but simply tempestuous, one feels this inherent masculinity in the sea's waters, in the Oread's invocation. Thus, when the appeal of the element resounds, "l'eau réclame en quelque sorte un don total, un don intime. L'eau veut un habitant"⁴².

This integration with nature, this death-instinct apparent at the end of the poem, reminds us of Shelley's cry in the "Ode to the West Wind": "'Be thou me!" — a romantic trait reinforced by the fact that the metaphor serves as interpretation for the spiritual state of the addressee, for lyric poetry is synonymous with "Ich-Dichtung" — the poet, in singing significant aspects (to him) of nature, is singing himself⁴³.

This fusion of the poet with the world or with beings

37 CIRLOT, p. 62-3.

38 CIRLOT, p. 63.

39 CIRLOT, p. 62.

40 RIDDEL, p. 449.

41 BACHELARD, G. *L'eau et les rêves*. Paris, Corti, 1973. p. 21.

42 BACHELARD, p. 221.

43 The contrasting of the two poems would also show how different are the poetic means which an Imagist uses to express the same theme.

surrounding him is apparent not only in "Oread", but also in other poems by H.D., such as "Lethe", in which the "roll of the full tide" shall cover "you", or "Mid-day", where the poet, identifying herself with "scattered seeds", will perish "among the crevices of the rocks". At the same time, by intertwining Greek myth and actuality, by making time rise to the timelessness of an Imperative mood (it lasts as long as the duration of the poem) and by creating space through the images in the poem's lines, H.D. succeeds in presenting to us her inward world, in which the sea "that echoes in the music of her lines 'surges in some far country of her imagination'"⁴⁴.

To conclude:

Classifying "Oread" according to Jakobson's six basic functions of verbal communication⁴⁵, one could find a highly Conative function in the nymph's address to the sea, which, combined with an underlying Emotive function, would give us the Poetic function which organizes the whole poem, through its forceful metaphorical language: the poem speaks its own message through the complete blending of sound, form and image. Here, the signs have value "per se", the lines are splashed out in the poem like waves, the sound of its words echo the resonance of the sea, the images convey one central "emotional complex"⁴⁶ while the expression focuses a single experience which is re-created again and again, with each wave that whirls up and splashes on the rocks, covering them with their "pools of fir".

This concentration of expression, perhaps H.D.'s most important feature in "Oread" — considered by critics to be "the" Imagist poem — strengthens once more the fact that form cannot be separated from content, in the poem's "lyric unity of sounds and meaning"⁴⁷, as in any work of art.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- 1 BACHELARD, G. *L'eau et les rêves*. Paris, Corti, 1973.
- 2 BOGAN, L. *Achievement in American poetry, 1900-1950*. Chicago, H. Regnery, 1951.
- 3 CIRLOT, J. E. *Diccionario de simbolos*. Barcelona, Labor, 1969.

44 RIDDEL, p. 447.

45 JAKOBSON, *Linguistics and poetics*, p. 353.

46 POUND, E. A few don't's. In: ————. *Literary essays*. New York. New Directions, 1971. p. 4.

47 STAIGER, E. *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*. Zurich, Atlantis Verlag, 1961. p. 16-7: "Ganz unwahrscheinlich ist es aber, dass gleichbedeutende Wörter verschiedener Sprachen dieselbe lyrische Einheit der Laute und ihrer Bedeutung ergeben (...) Der Wert von lyrischen Versen als solchen besteht in dieser Einheit der Bedeutung der Worte und ihrer Musik (...) Daher ist jedes Wort, ja jede Silbe in einem lyrischen Gedicht ganz unentbehrlich und unersetzlich (...) Aber je lyrischer ein Gedicht ist, desto unantastbarer ist es".

- 4 COFFMAN JR., S. *Imagism, a chapter for the history of modern poetry*. Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1951.
- 5 DANIELS, L. *The art of reading poetry*. New York, Farrar & Rinehart, 1941.
- 6 DOOLITTLE, H. *Collected poems*. New York, Liveright Publ., 1925.
- 7 DUCROT, O. & TODOROV, T. *Dictionnaire encyclopédique des sciences du langage*. Paris, Seuil, 1972.
- 8 JAKOBSON, R. *Linguística. Poética. Cinema*. São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1970.
- 9 ———. *Preliminaries to speech analysis*. Cambridge, M. I. T. Press, 1963.
- 10 KENYON & KNOTT. *A pronouncing dictionary of American English*. Springfield, Merriam, 1953.
- 11 LEECH, G. N. *A linguistic guide to English poetry*. London, Longman, 1969.
- 12 LEMON, L. T. & REIS, M. J., ed. *Teoria da literatura: formalistas russos*. Porto Alegre, Globo, 1971.
- 13 LEVIN, S. *Linguistic structures in poetry*. The Hague, Mouton, 1962.
- 14 NANNY, M. *Ezra Pound's visual poetry and the method of science*. *English Studies*, 43 (5), Oct. 1962.
- 15 POMORSKA, K. *Formalismo e futurismo*. São Paulo, Perspectiva, 1972.
- 16 POUND, E. *Literary essays*. New York, New Directions, 1971.
- 17 PRATT, W. *The imagist poem*. New York, E. P. Dutton, 1963.
- 18 ROBLES, F. C. S. *Ensayo de un diccionario mitológico universal*. Madrid, Aguilar, 1958.
- 19 SANETOMO, M. N. *Le kinkai-shu*. Change, Paris, 1970.
- 20 SAPIR, E. *The musical foundations of verse*. *Journal of English and Germanic philology*, 20(2):213-28, 1921.
- 21 SEBEOK, T. A., ed. *Dictionary of world literary terms*. London, Allen & Unwin, 1970.
- 21 SEBEOK, T. A., ed. *Style in language*. Cambridge, M. I. T. Press, 1960.
- 22 SHIPLEY, J. T., ed. *Dictionary of world literary terms*. London, Allen & Unwin, 1970.
- 23 SOME imagist poets; an anthology. New York, Kraus Reprint, 1969.
- 24 STAIGER, E. *Grundbegriffe der Poetik*. Zürich, Atlantis Verlag, 1961.
- 25 SWAN, T. B. *The classical world of H. D.* Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 1962.
- 26 ZOLKOVSKIJ, A. K. *Del amplificazione*. In: FACCANI, R. & ECO, U. *I sistemi di segni e lo strutturalismo sovietico*. Milano, Bompiani, s. d. p. 91-8.