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**IMPLICIT NORM CREATION IN THE U.S. POETRY
CRITICISM IN THE 1990S
MA thesis**

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ABSTRACT

Poetry criticism is a type of writing where the critic's implicit norms have great influence over the demotion or promotion of a poet. However, despite the extensive text and critical discourse analysis studies done in the last decades, articles of poetry criticism have not been reviewed at great length. This study selected a corpus of American poetry reviews written in the 1990s to analyze language use in order to discover any potential patterns in implicit norm creation in U.S. poetry criticism.

After the introductory chapter has provided a brief overview of implicit norm treatment by different schools of thought in, the methodology and data chapter explicates the adapted version of Norman Fairclough's Critical Language Study (CLS) used in an interdisciplinary manner to analyze the corpus of texts selected from three U.S. poetry magazines' issues between 1994-1999. The analysis findings are then presented in the results chapter.

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1 INTRODUCTION AND THEORY

1.1. Introduction

This paper will look at implicit norm creation on part of poetry critics in the texts written in the 1990s about contemporary American poetry, i.e. the U.S. poetry of the 90s. I will first present a short overview of the function of 'canon' and its construction in order to provide the background on the issue of canonization and norm creation. In highlighting three different approaches to implicit norm creation that I call the *traditionalist*, the *deconstructionist*, and the *syncretist* approach strictly within the context of this thesis, I will demonstrate the diverse understanding of implicit norms behind the creation of the lists of greats. The purpose of the brief overview is not to choose sides but to show the nature of disputes that have raged around canonicity and norm creation. Here it is useful to note that I will be using the term 'canon' in quotation marks, because by today's standards the term has become far too contentious to be used earnestly or without explanatory remarks. A much less loaded term is 'implicit norm' that is also used in the title of this paper.

The focus of this paper is then to analyze norm creation and discursal effects in American poetry criticism. In the next chapter, the chapter of methodology and data, I will describe in greater detail an adapted version of Norman Fairclough's Critical Language Study (Fairclough 1996) and the sample I chose from American poetry magazines of the 1990s.

The third chapter, the chapter of results, shows in detail the analysis process and the results gained from it, focusing on the aspects most relevant to implicit norms and their creation. As per Fairclough's model, the chapter supplements the descriptive phase with the integral phases of interpretation and explanation, summing up the findings in a cohesive manner.

The conclusion of the thesis will summarize the overview on implicit norms and their treatment by various schools of thought, moving then on to the concise recapture of the application of Fairclough's CLS (Fairclough 1996). The conclusion will also recall the major findings from the results chapter, showing their potential for future studies.

1.2. The concept of canon and implicit norms

1.2.1. The concept of canon

In the realm of any fine arts some authors are raised to the pedestal of 'classics'. E. Dean Kolbas (2001) says that, “in addition to cultural reproduction, the very concept of canon necessarily involves qualitative judgment, because to be canonical also means to be exemplary.” (Kolbas 2001: 2). However, the concept of canon has become a battleground in the past, but especially in the late 20th century. Various authors and theorists have been at odds over whether the set of works or authors is closed or open to new arrivals, whether the works or authors are selected through universal criteria or whether they are merely promoted in the strongest possible way by people in positions of power in the field.

Regardless of whether the principles of canon-formation are disputed or not, most authors would agree that the concept of 'canon' is what Peter Robinson calls “a hierarchy of texts with a widely-accepted group of masterpieces at its apex” (Gabler *et al* 2010: 1) and what Liviu Papadima describes as the means to “make objects of art endure” (Papadima *et al* 2011: 9). As Papadima notes, if we really do need canons, it is because we need to choose between the enormous number of cultural artifacts available (Papadima *et al* 2011: 9).

The question of whether the 'pinnacle' is somehow an easily definable natural entity or a construct that needs constant support and revision is answered differently by the various factions. Even today, after decades of fierce battles over what is and is not 'canonical', the world of criticism often fragments into three distinct camps that we might – for the sole purpose and context of this paper – designate as the *traditionalists*, the *deconstructionists* and the *syncretists*. In the latter part of this chapter, I will also briefly describe a concept called the 'nonce canon' which authors like Tom Quirk and Joseph Csicsila (2004) reserve strictly for the set of works and writers presented in anthologies and scholarly texts.

1.2.2. Traditional view of the canon

The traditionalists believe that the 'canonical' works in a particular field have arisen through countless duels and battles with their peers, surviving the tests of time due to their inherent quality – an aesthetic value that surpasses any competition. For the purposes of this paper, we might arbitrarily classify such critics Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot, Harold Bloom and Frank Kermode, for example, under this label. The traditionalists consider a

'canon' to be a set of elite works; it is a collection of texts or authors that have surpassed all the others in the diachronic road to perfection. In the words of Matthew Arnold, the dominant idea of poetry is the “idea of beauty and of a human nature perfect on all its sides”, this is “a true and invaluable idea” and when this idea is accompanied by religion that represents a perfectly moral human nature that has conquered its animalistic faults, the end result is the best art and poetry (Arnold 2006: 41). In his lecture on Matthew Arnold, T.S. Eliot affirmed: “From time to time, every hundred years or so, it is desirable that some critic shall appear to review the past of our literature, and set the poets and the poems in a new order.” (Eliot 1986: 100). This might at first glance seem to indicate that the 'canon' is reborn in every century but for Eliot “[t]his task is not one of revolution but of readjustment.” (*ibid.*)

Harold Bloom, a venerable critic and trend-setter who has been a staunch and oft-times bitter defender of the traditionalist approach, states that the job of a critic is to “isolate the qualities that made these authors canonical, that is, authoritative in our culture” (Bloom 1994: 1). Bloom is prone to using phrases like 'major author' or 'central figure' to denote writers he considers unquestionable greats and he tries to “represent national canons by their crucial figures“ (Bloom 1994: 2). In a typically sweeping statement, Bloom declares, for example, that William Shakespeare is “the largest writer we ever will know” (Bloom 1994: 3). An important aspect of the traditionalist theory is that the authors have survived the challenges of their own and subsequent eras to rise above others, it is no longer necessary to question their credentials: the battles have been won and they have earned their reprieve and a place among the greats. For Bloom, it is the critical establishment that must respond to the challenge from Shakespeare and prove their claims, not vice versa. As he contemptuously states, he finds it

absurd and regrettable that the current criticism of Shakespeare – “cultural materialist” (Neo-Marxist); “New Historicist” (Foucault), “Feminist” – has abandoned the quest to meet that challenge. Shakespeare criticism is in full flight from his aesthetic supremacy [...] as though there were no authentic differences in aesthetic merit between the creator of Lear, Hamlet, Iago, Falstaff and his disciples such as John Webster and Thomas Middleton. (Bloom 1994: 3).

Calling writers like Webster and Middleton mere 'disciples' of Shakespeare, Bloom emphasizes that attempts to raise them to the rank of Shakespeare in the canon will fail, for there are “authentic differences in aesthetic merit”: regardless of the effort of “current criticism”, Shakespeare will remain unshakably greater than his contemporaries. Interestingly, Bloom appears to ignore the contentious issue of whether the norms

according to which critics of any era judge the works and compile the canon are themselves dependent on some outside factors or whether they are grounded in some transcendental aesthetic realm; by refusing to take up the issue, Bloom apparently believes the norms are indeed universal throughout time. Stanley Fish, among other authors, would here respond that canonical norms are the “accidents of class, race, gender and political circumstance” (Clausen 1991: 200). Yet both Fish and Bloom would perhaps unexpectedly agree that the deconstructive attack that wants to make the 'canon' more open is not the solution: “[t]he other party (the various apostles of interdisciplinarity) seeks its escape in a liberal utopia of enlarged sympathies and nonjudgmental (i.e. ever more tolerant) mental processes)” (Fish 1994: 25).

An arguably less militant defender of the traditionalist 'canon' is Frank Kermode who, according to Robert Alter, is a far cry from the previous generation of traditionalist critics like Matthew Arnold, F. R. Leavis or Cleanth Brooks (Kermode & Alter 2004: 5); whose undeterred belief in their infallible judgment and wisdom seems at best quirky after the fierce canonicity debates of the 20th century. Kermode does not seem to believe that the selection of canonical works (i.e. the formal compilation of 'canon') is somehow a flawless construct that survives the test of time – it is rather the inherent aesthetic quality in the works that keeps finding new serious readers in every era, despite their inevitable differences in various epochs (Kermode & Alter 2004: 19). This view has strong resemblance to the opinions of the 'syncretists' as I will show later on in this chapter.

Perhaps a telling statement of the traditionalist view is that the 'key writers' “personify whatever literary spirit the era possesses” (Bloom 1994: 2). They are the symbols, the take-away names from a particular era. But they also contain in themselves the chain of great authors on whose shoulders the author stands. As T.S. Eliot has put it, historical sense of the whole of European literature that compels one to write is “a sense of the timelessness as well as of the temporal and of the timeless and of the temporal together” (Eliot 1921) – this is what makes a writer traditional; it is a combination of his or her era and the literary heritage of the past. Therefore, one of the reasons the traditionalist view is so appealing is that it contains a chain of greats that offers an easy overview of literature to anyone compiling curricula or anthologies or to a person who asks for the selection of authors to read from a bewildering array of works written in human history. As Peter Robinson notes with warm humor:

[...] the words “canon”, “canonical” and “canonicity” evoke [for textual scholars and academics] a time when life seemed simpler, and perhaps even golden. Textual scholars were particularly well served by the notion of an accepted canon: a hierarchy of texts with a widely-accepted group of masterpieces at its apex, which (all agreed) needed to be provided with thorough, scholarly, exact, accurate, well-presented and (yes!) definitive editions. (Gabler *et al* 2010: 1)

In this sense, it is interesting to note that Theo D'haen (2011) has described how Paul Lauter chronicled the institutionalization of American literature and discovered that the new restricted canon in the 1920s favored white, male authors predominantly from North-Eastern middle class, while the earlier American canon had included its share of women and blacks (Papadima *et al* 2011: 25-26). In other words, the new 'classic' and 'timeless' canon differed from the earlier versions, casting doubt at the continuity of this timelessness and indicating perhaps a need to investigate more closely the implicit norms used in the creation of such lists of selected greats. As Liviu Papadima remarks: “To every epoch, its canons. To every canon, its cannons.” (Papadima *et al* 2011: 9).

1.2.3. The deconstruction view of the canon

The deconstructionists base their resistance on the very notion of rejecting most, if not all, of the founding pillars of the traditionalist theory. Such authors as Terry Eagleton, Raymond Williams and Stephen Greenblatt have become some of the most frequently quoted representatives of what Bloom derisively calls 'the School of Resentment'. It is crucial to note, though, that there is hardly any unified 'School' or 'Theory' and it is more like a catchphrase for a wide, often disparate array of disciplines, practices and theories that are frequently in ferocious conflict with each other. The one unifying feature appears to be only the uniformly shared dissatisfaction with the traditionalist concept of 'canon' and their selection of works. The deconstructionists point out that the compilation is done almost exclusively by Western scholars, typically older men of better than average social class. But even if this is overcome by the inclusion of works from the so-called minority groups, the deconstructionists emphasize the changing nature of 'canon' – unlike the conservative concept of traditional 'canon' that originally selected works rarely leave, the actual public 'canon' tends to change quite often. Bloom might blame these changes on the scholars who meddle with the established 'canon', but it would prove the deconstructionist's point either way: both the initial draft of 'The Canon' and any later changes are affected by norms and social constructs. Any form of 'canon' is an artificial, man-made structure. As Stanley Fish has proposed, 'interpretive communities' or groups of 'informed readers' who possess both linguistic competence and literary competence, “adopt particular kinds of

reading strategies which will, in due course, determine the entire reading process, the stylistic peculiarities of a literary text as well as the expertise of assimilating them” (Keitel 2010: 348).

Due to the diversity and disparity of the opposition to traditionalist canon, I therefore hesitate to lump all such factions under the label 'deconstructionist' without a caveat. If we do acknowledge, though, that the unifying banner for such groups is the resistance to the traditionalist 'canon', we might continue using the label strictly within the context of this paper. I have highlighted these statements merely as an indication of the profound differences among the opponents to the traditionalist view, not as the foremost representatives of the opposition to 'canon'. The issue of norm creation, author selection and curriculum construction has been so bitterly contested in the last decades that it is difficult to corral the various factions into neat camps. Yet the main focus should remain not on the different approaches to the problem with the traditionalist definition of 'canon', but on the essence of the problem – the 'canon' is not a collection of objectively selected, best works ever compiled, but a group of works or authors selected by specific people according to specific norms and criteria. Regardless of what the New Historicism, Feminist, Marxist or any other 'deconstructionist' school thinks about its competitors or rivals, they are united in their opposition to the view of 'The Canon' as an indivisible, integral pinnacle of best works that is not subject to any forces outside literary context.

1.2.4. The syncretist view of the canon

The third way, that I call the 'syncretist' view in the context of this paper, reconciles the traditionalist belief that a 'canon' is a necessary construct along with the accusation that any kind of canon is an inherently artificial construct that is arbitrarily compiled. The syncretists attempt to look beyond the latter problem to claim that even though a 'canon' is indeed compiled on the basis of empirical observations – not transcendental, universal aesthetic values pertaining to the whole human culture – and can be dismantled, it is still a viable construct that is necessary for practical purposes. This construct can be used to compile curricula and anthologies, to recommend the 'best' books from a particular region or genre, and to generally inform the reader about the history of literature.

A proponent of the syncretist view is E. Dean Kolbas who in his book *Critical Theory and the Literary Canon* (2001) suggests that “both liberal pluralists and conservative humanists, to use a familiar shorthand, seem to share a surprisingly uniform

conception of the canon itself, as either a singular legacy of artistic excellence or an elite body of works whose privileged station must now be exposed in the name of social justice” (Kolbas 2001: 3). Kolbas applies Adorno's critical theory on the debate neither to establish another expansion of the canon or to legitimize it as an indivisible whole, but rather as an attempt to expose many flaws in the claims about canon (Kolbas 2001: 2).

For Kolbas says that the crux of Adorno's theory is that, even though individual works of art are accommodated and administrated by the totalizing society, their autonomy also provides a critique of the same society that absorbs them (Kolbas 2001: 83-84). Kolbas proposes that critical theory will provide a way that “salvages the aesthetic content of canonical works, yet avoids lapsing into reactionary glorifications of them” (Kolbas 2001: 2). It is this reconciliation that tempts me to label the approach 'syncretist'. Kolbas also astutely points out that though the debate over 'canon' is sometimes dismissed as a mere issue of educational reform or university curricula, more consideration must be paid to “other cultural forces and non-academic institutions that also affect canon formation, including the publishing and entertainment industries, the mass media, and the commodification of culture in general” (Kolbas 2001: 4). In other words, implicit norms are created perhaps not only in texts of scholarly critique, but also through the choice of publication and the reception of a specific work. However, Kolbas refuses to reduce the debate to the sociological or political level, maintaining that critical theory discusses canonicity through the prism of aesthetics. Wishing to avoid in his words both the naïve celebration of Western culture and the condemnation of canon as an ideologically bankrupt political construct, Kolbas stresses the cognitive and critical attributes of a work of art (Kolbas 2001: 5).

1.2.5. The 'nonce canon'

A fourth approach to canon that Joseph Csicsila and Tom Quirk call the 'nonce canon' is an alternative interpretation of the canon concept and is therefore somewhat at a distance from the battle over the traditional understanding of 'canon'. Csicsila and Quirk define this classification as a “category comprising authors and works that are passed along from one generation to the next through anthologies and scholarly texts” (Csicsila & Quirk 2004: xix). This concept arises from a formulation by Wendell Harris who lists ten types of canon, among them the 'nonce canon', to argue that there has never been such a thing as The Canon. Harris builds on a list originally compiled by Alastair Fowler who defined the

types of canons in his article “Genre and the Literary Canon” (1979). Fowler listed six types: the *official* canon is institutionalized through education, patronage and journalism; the *personal* canon comprises works that an individual values and knows; the *potential* canon consists of the entire written corpus and surviving oral literature (but remains inaccessible due to rarity or inaccessibility, for example); the *accessible* canon is much more limited; the *selective* canons are the lists gained after applying systematic preferences; and the *critical* canon is “surprisingly narrow” and forms the systematic preferences cited above (Fowler 1979: 98:99). To these, Harris adds four new types: the closed, uniquely authoritative body of texts, such as the *Biblical* canon; the *pedagogical* canon of texts commonly taught at schools; the “glacially changing core” or *diachronic* canon; and the rapidly changing periphery of *nonce* canon “only a minuscule part of which will eventually become part of the diachronic canon” (Harris 1991: 112-113). Curiously, Joseph Csicsila claims that this is “groundbreaking analysis” and that critics who relentlessly attack The Canon “only partake in an utterly irresolvable inquiry but also frustrate the possibility for a substantive understanding of the forces involved in canonical evaluation” (Csicsila & Quirk 2004: xviii). In other words, Csicsila solves the canonicity debates by arguing that the only concept worth discussing is the canon present in anthologies and academic texts which is an “utterly tangible category” and merely shows the works and authors present in these texts. It seems to me that, contrary to resolving the issue of who forms canons and why, the 'nonce canon' simply takes us back to square one, merely dropping the debate down one level. It would be only logical to compare this to the wider concept of 'canon' and conclude that a school of 'nonce canon deconstruction' or 'syncretist nonce canon' is nothing more than a sub-set of the wider debate over 'canon'. I therefore leave the 'nonce canon' issue aside, apart from this very brief detour.

1.2.6. Implicit norms

The three major approaches to 'canon' that, respectively, consecrate a selection of elite works, critique its ideological and material construction, and attempt to marry recognition of elite status with practical use, provide a short overview of the battles that have been raging in academic circles. This paper, however, is more interested not in whether any approach is 'correct' or whether there is need for another conceptualization of 'canon', but in how the critics writing about American poetry have used discourse and rhetorical devices to express implicit norms. The short overview above was provided

merely to highlight the different conceptions of 'canon' held by various factions and to provide the reader with a simplified background to the debate over norm creation. While 1990s are too recent to talk about any canonicity, such thinking can be detected in the corpus and the critics do sometimes use strategies to promote poets as if to include them in some sort of list of recommended authors.

I have been using the term 'canon' in quotation marks, because by today's standards the term has become far too contentious to be used earnestly or without explanatory remarks. A much less loaded term is 'implicit norm' that is also used in the title of this paper. The lack of an unchallenged, solid list of canonical works does not mean there are no norms that critics use to distinguish between works that are lauded and works that are left aside. These norms are there and help form opinions – I am therefore interested in the implicit norms that underlie critical assumptions and conclusions. The implicit norm is not 'canon', but a tool used to elevate certain works and techniques.

Since the 'canon' as a concept generally includes authors from the past and is slow to react to the emergence of new authors – this is the “glacially changing core” that Harris (1991) mentioned –, it is not fruitful to look at the norm creation in the 1990s through the prism of canonization. While it is true that the poetry criticism articles I am going to look at will have some impact on the future acceptance of authors into the list of poets taught and anthologized in the American culture, the syncretist view of the so-called 'canon' suggests that implicit norms are also created through the filters outside literary criticism, such as through the choices made in the publishing and entertainment industries, the mass media, and culture in general (Kolbas 2001: 4). I will not therefore draw a direct line from the opinions expressed in the articles in the sample to the eventual status of the poets today.

1.3. Research questions

For this analysis, I will be looking at a corpus of poetry reviews collected from a selection of U.S. publications dedicated to poetry written by contemporary U.S. authors in the years 1990-1999 (included). Since the aim of the study is to look at discursive attempts in a text and not to determine their success or to consider the status of the critic, I will not perform an exhaustive review of all publications treating U.S. poetry, nor will I track the progress of a certain author or critic. The selection of articles and reviews from American journals is analyzed to highlight willful or subconscious efforts – the paper makes no attempt to differentiate between the two – on part of the critic in enforcing implicit

frameworks that might in simplified terms be called 'good' or 'bad' poetry. The focus is not on whether the critic is right to make any statements, whether the statements hold under scrutiny, whether the poet eventually proved critics wrong or right or whether there is some ulterior motive behind the statement (related to personal relationships, vengeance or anything else along these lines). Analysis of the texts will require the application of the adapted form of Norman Fairclough's (1996) Critical Language Study (CLS) to disclose discursive techniques used to promote or demote the reviewed poet. Use of a tool not commonly found in literary analysis is deliberate in order to see whether such an interdisciplinary approach will yield robust results that can form the basis for future studies.

The analysis will attempt to answer my research questions: 1) How do critics attempt to promote or demote contemporary U.S. poets in the 1990s? 2) How and to what extent are rhetorical effects, presuppositions, discursive techniques and such employed in the creation of tacit or implicit norms about 'good' poetry?

2 METHODOLOGY AND DATA

2.1. Critical Language Study (CLS)

2.1.1. What is CLS?

Since this chapter quotes predominantly from only one source, Norman Fairclough's 1996 edition of *Language and Power*, all in-text references to this book will henceforth be rendered in the format 'publication year: page number' (e.g. 1996: 24), omitting the name. Such a change in format is done for the sake of simplicity and is limited to this chapter only. Any other quotations and references in this chapter will still employ the default format 'author(s) name(s) publication year: page number' (e.g. Widdowson 2004: 103).

Norman Fairclough's critical language study (CLS) was first introduced in 1989 when he published the book *Language and Power*. This paper uses the 1996 edition of *Language and Power* or rather the slightly modified version of the methodology proposed there. The body of work has remained unchanged in the 2001 edition and since Fairclough has later shifted his focus more onto political ideology and class struggle, it did not seem prudent to replace the earlier, text-oriented model with any later, politics-oriented model.

Fairclough calls his approach critical language study (CLS), because it aims to “show up connections which may be hidden from people – such as the connections between language, power and ideology” (1996: 5). Nowadays the more widespread term is critical discourse analysis or CDA, but in the context of this thesis, Fairclough's original term will be more appropriate. CLS looks at social interactions through linguistic prism to highlight “generally hidden determinants in the system of social relationships” and “hidden effects” on that system (1996: 5).

2.1.2. Differences between CLS and other methods of discourse or text analysis

Fairclough believed that CLS was necessary, despite the multitude of approaches to the study of language that existed back then, because all other methods suffered from a major limitation of methodology (1996: 6). Despite this, Fairclough integrated some of their findings into the formation of CLS. For example, cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence experts have studied the discrepancies between what is said and what is meant

and Fairclough states that the important result for CLS is the study of how an utterance is interpreted by actively matching its features at various levels with representations or prototypes in the decoder's long-term memory (1996: 10-11). Fairclough calls these prototypes *members' resources* (or MR for short) – these are the shapes of words, the grammatical forms, typical narrative structures, object and person properties, expected discourse sequences etc (1996: 11). The important point is that comprehension results from interactions between the interpreted utterance and MR.

Fairclough also notes that social theory has provided several contributions pertinent to CLS, listing three. First is the theory of ideology that sees language as a major locus of ideology. Second is the work of Michel Foucault who has reserved for discourse a central role in the development of modern forms of power. Third is the work of Jürgen Habermas whose theory of communicative action shows how our currently distorted communication has nevertheless indicated at the possibility of communication without such constraints (1996: 12-13).

2.1.3. Discourse and language as terms in CLS

CLS rests on two key assumptions: 1) social conditions determine properties of discourse, and 2) the way people interpret features of texts depends upon which social – more specifically, discursive – conventions they are assuming to hold (1996: 19). Here it is important to note a crucial aspect of Fairclough's terminology: 'discourse' can have a multitude of meanings as even a cursory glance at academic literature might reveal. Fairclough, however, defines discourse mostly – but not exclusively – as 'language as a form of social practice' (1996: 20), yet he does not use the term 'language' in the "Saussurean terms" but as "language use conceived of as socially determined" (1996: 22). For Fairclough, 'language' is more like Saussure's *parole* – what is actually said or written (compared to *langue* as an ideal command of grammar) –; it does not mean unitary and homogeneous conventions, "on the contrary, they are characterized by diversity, and by power struggle" (1996: 22). Homogeneity is only achieved by imposition through superior power as in the case of standardization of language (1996: 22).

Fairclough's discourse is language in social use and he notes that, because the terms 'discourse' and 'practice' can mean both action and convention, they are 'felicitously ambiguous', helping to underline their social nature and suggesting that an individual instance always also implies social conventions (1996: 28). For Fairclough, any act of

speech or writing inevitably involves a social dimension and thereby the unavoidable social struggle.

2.1.4. CLS, ideology and power

One of the main purposes for Fairclough's CLS is a study of ideology behind texts and utterances. In his wording, existing power relations are directly or indirectly legitimized by institutional practices that people rely on without acknowledging the process – the assumptions inherent in the practices are the very source of ideological power which is “the power to project one's practices as universal and 'common sense'” (1996: 33). As discourse participants draw unwittingly on these 'common sense' assumptions, they perpetuate the existing power relations through reproduction of the orders of discourse and other aspects of social structure that have been internalized – naturalized – in their members' resources (MR) (1996: 39). In this process, the structures are constantly regenerated and reproduced, affirming the existing status, but they may also be produced in modified forms; thus reproduction may be both conservative and transformatory (1996: 39).

However, it is important to note that while Fairclough's method looks at and for ideologies that might be termed 'political ideologies', this paper is more concerned with ideology as a term defined by Teun Van Dijk (1998). Van Dijk says that “an ideology is the set of factual and evaluative beliefs – that is, the knowledge and the opinions – of a group” (Van Dijk 1998: 48). When employing Fairclough's CLS, I am therefore looking for such sets of beliefs the author is expressing, rather than a narrow political belief system.

2.1.5. Power 'in' and 'behind' discourse

Here it would be prudent to point out that while Fairclough discusses any use of language in any form or context, this thesis focuses strictly on written, prepared texts – not transcripts or oral conversations or speeches – and therefore some of the discussion surrounding CLS and a sizable portion of the CLS method does not apply in this context. For example, since in Fairclough's terminology 'power in discourse' pertains especially to powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants (1996: 49), it applies predominantly to a dialogue. The main issues with written texts are the 'one-sidedness' as there is a marked line between producer(s) and interpreter(s), and the fact that there is no way to know who will be the actual interpreter, forcing producers of public media texts to address an ideal subject (1996: 49). The latter

fact means that any actual recipients must negotiate a relationship with that ideal subject (1996: 49).

While power in discourse might apply more to dialogue, power *behind* discourse applies to all discourse types and holds together the whole social order of discourse (1996: 55). Discourse types are an effect of power and their conventions embody specific power relations (1996: 58); this power effect manifests itself as a discourse type that is actually imposed on all the discourse participants and belongs to the power-holders (1996: 61). In this way, the power-holder in a particular discourse type such as an article of poetry criticism might be the critic, but at the same time the discourse type also enforces the critic's compliance with the conventions through the publication's editorial board, the critic's measure of success as a determiner of his or her future employment opportunities and so on.

This power is not equally distributed – much like material wealth, 'cultural wealth' is disparate, leading to unequal access to discourse types and discursive positions of power (1996: 63). One of the most visible effects of constraints on discourse access is how having such access and a position of power itself automatically enhances status and authority and how professional know-how and skill themselves pose as symbols of personal achievement – specialist jargon and other such discursive practices simultaneously act as 'membership cards' for the privileged and a barrier to the excluded outsiders (1996: 64).

Yet it is important to stress that power – whether inside or behind the discourse – is never permanently and undisputedly held by any person or group; it has to be constantly reasserted (1996: 68). Reassertion by power-holders occurs through three types of constraints: constraints on contents, relationships, and subjects that structurally speaking manifest themselves respectively as *knowledge and beliefs*, *social relationships*, and *social identities* (1996: 75). These three categories of constraints are used in every society to achieve coordination and commonality of practice through three mechanisms: firstly, through the practices and discourse types that are universally followed and accepted because of seemingly no plausible alternative; secondly, through the hidden implementation of power that Fairclough calls 'inculcation'; and thirdly, through the process of rational communication and debate that he calls 'communication' (1996: 74-75). The significant term here is 'inculcation' that Fairclough defines as something that is “motivated by a wish to re-create the universality and 'naturalness' of the first mechanism

under conditions of class domination and division” – in other words, it attempts to naturalize the practices needed to facilitate the implementation of power (1996: 75).

This 'natural' practice is for discourse participants the 'common sense' or the ideological assumptions that sustain existing power relations (1996: 77). Yet 'common sense' must be coherent on two levels: a) between the sequential parts of a text and b) between parts of a text and the actual world (1996: 78). Without coherence, a statement stands out and attracts attention; thus texts that presuppose a view of the world that would appear strange to the reader reveal their implicit assumptions and make these more easily recognizable (1996: 79). Since Fairclough claims that 'common sense' is predominantly – though not completely – ideological and ideology is essentially linked to power relations, it follows that 'common sense' is employed in sustaining existing power relations (1996: 84). If a dominant discourse type dominates an institution so thoroughly the alternatives are more or less suppressed, it will no longer be seen as arbitrary but natural and legitimate – it simply is the one way; this is what naturalization of a discourse type means in practice (1996: 91). The important aspect is that a naturalized type is not perceived as that of a particular group in the institution, it seems to be that of the institution itself – it thus appears neutral, outside of ideology (1996: 92). Naturalization of a discourse type comes hand-in-hand with the generation of common sense rationalizations of such practices in order to legitimize them (1996: 92), this 'natural' way of doing things 'as they have always been done' or 'because there really is no alternative' is a marker of a naturalized discourse type.

2.2. Using the CLS Method

2.2.1. Interdisciplinary approach

As described above, Fairclough proposes the critical language study (CLS) as the method for disclosing hidden discourse types and power relations. He himself uses it in the book to analyze medical discourse, newspaper articles, interview transcripts, and other artifacts from the realm beyond fiction and poetry. I, on the other hand, am employing CLS on articles of critique that, firstly, concern poetry and, secondly, are often written by poets themselves who exploit the form to write language that could conceivably be called at least 'poetic' on its own. In other words, I used a tool designed primarily for social texts on texts concerning literature. This was not only intentional but a goal on my part as I intended to see whether such a robust discourse analysis method from another discipline would yield

results in a sample of poetry criticism texts. If successful, it would add another tool into the literary text analysis toolkit alongside more typical methods like close reading.

CLS consists of three main stages: 1) description of text, 2) interpretation of the relationship between text and interaction, and 3) explanation of the relationship between interaction and social context; these three stages are organized around 10 primary questions that are in turn broken down into sub-questions and facets (1996: 110). Fairclough stresses that his method is “a guide, not a blueprint” and some parts may be far too detailed or irrelevant or, conversely, insufficiently detailed and in need of supplementation (1996: 110). Throughout the book he encourages the analyst to tailor the method according to specific needs and to ignore irrelevant parts altogether. For this reason, I adapted for my thesis a curtailed version of Fairclough's CLS, omitting parts B and C that concern, respectively, grammatical features and qualities pertaining to monologues and dialogues. The remainder of the method, part A, deals with vocabulary and includes 4 of the 10 questions in the full-length CLS method. These four questions will be described extensively in article 2.2.4 of this chapter.

2.2.2. Members' resources

A key term in Fairclough's method denotes the prototypes discourse participants use to decode discourse. Fairclough calls these prototypes 'members' resources' (or MR for short) – these are the shapes of words, the grammatical forms, typical narrative structures, object and person properties, expected discourse sequences etc (1996: 11). The important point is that comprehension results from interactions between the interpreted utterance and MR.

Some of the MR are especially significant in the context of this thesis. Firstly, there is the presupposition that poetry is worthy of being critiqued and reviewed, that there is a need for such debate. This MR is shared by all reviewers and perhaps also by the other participants in the discourse. Secondly, there is the expected discourse style the reviewers appear to follow that prescribes a relatively rich, poetic, and even ornamental style to a poetry review. Thirdly, there are the ideological MR that we might call 'common sense' and that appear to be presupposed by quite a few authors. Markers of such 'common sense' presuppositions are found, for example, in a quote like “Hudgins has a profound (and unusual) awareness of the impact of American social caste systems” (Wojahn 1995) where the author presumes that anyone observing the U.S. society would notice the existence of

caste systems. Fourthly, there is the specialist jargon as a prerequisite to discourse participation. All such MR have to be shared by the participants in order to comprehend the discourse.

2.2.3. Formal features

Formal features are particular choices made among the discourse types the text relies on and in order to interpret the actual features it is necessary to look at what other choices might have been made; thus the focus alternates between the text itself and the discourse type(s) it draws upon (1996: 110). Fairclough distinguishes between three types of values for formal features: experiential, relational, and expressive (1996: 112). An experiential value is “a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer's experience of the natural or social world is represented”; it is to do with content, knowledge and beliefs (1996: 112). A relational value refers to social relationships. An expressive value deals with subjects and social identities. Fairclough emphasizes that any formal feature may simultaneously have two or three values (1996: 112). A fourth, separate factor is the connective value that has a partially 'inner' value, because it concerns the formal feature values in both connecting parts of texts and with the relationship between texts and contexts (1996: 129-130).

Fairclough summarizes the three values and links in the following table:

Dimensions of meaning	Values of features	Structural effects
Contents	Experiential	Knowledge/beliefs
Relations	Relational	Social relations
Subjects	Expressive	Social identities

Table 1. Aspects of formal features (1996: 112)

For the purposes of this thesis, the experiential values (knowledge and beliefs of the author) are especially important as they reveal the author's opinion of poetry, referring to the implicit norms the author employs.

2.2.4. Description

2.2.4.1. Question 1: What experiential values do words have?

Experiential aspect is one of the most significant in the context of this thesis as it displays the ideological differences encoded into the vocabulary (1996: 112-113). Sometimes it is about the words as such – 'poet' and 'master' may refer to the same person, but their choice reveals the tone of the text (1996: 113). Second, it is about co-occurrence or collocation with other words, giving an ideologically specific and dominant scheme

(1996: 113-114). Third, it might be about the metaphorical transfer of a word or expression (1996: 114). Overwording might show preoccupation with some aspect that reveals a site of ideological struggle. All of these choices made by the author may have some link to implicit norms.

2.2.4.2. Question 2: What relational values do words have?

Relational value is an interesting phenomenon in that a word with experiential value might be assumed to be shared by both the text's author and its reader, thus referring to a social relationship (1996: 116). For example, an expression like *as we all know, X is by far the greatest poet in her generation* implies consensus between the author and the reader. If this is unopposed in a dialogue, it would confirm such consensus. Obviously, in written text the reader's actual response is unrecorded, yet this “commonality of values” is also used in such text where the author might assume that certain formulations would elicit a positive evaluation on part of the reader (1996: 117). Authors often also avoid experiential values for relational reasons, using euphemistic expressions or formality to avoid negative values (1996: 117).

2.2.4.3. Question 3: What expressive values do words have?

The choice of vocabulary can implicitly reveal the author's evaluation of the subject at hand (1996: 118). If a poet is 'a tired follower of the past trends', it is unlikely the author is offering praise. Ideologically contrastive schemes suggest an ideological clash (1996: 119).

2.2.4.4. Question 4: What metaphors are used?

Any aspect can be expressed through any number of metaphors and the relationship between alternative metaphors is of particular interest, because different metaphors have different ideological links (1996: 119). In the context of this thesis, I was also interested in whether there were any types of metaphors that critics like to use in the majority of positive or negative texts in relation to poetry.

2.2.5. Interpretation

2.2.5.1. Interpretation as procedure and practice

The descriptive phase of my adapted version of CLS is made up of 4 questions that allow the analyst to focus on formal text features. However, one cannot translate the formal text features directly to the structural effects on society, because the relationships between text and social structures are indirect and mediated firstly by discourse and secondly by its

social context (1996: 140).

Fairclough points out that 'interpretation' is both the name of the stage in the procedure and also the activity the discourse participants use – this is deliberate because of the essential similarity between the operation of the analyst and the participants (1996: 140). Each participant – and analyst – brings to the discourse his or her members' resources (MR) and interpretations are generated through the “dialectical interplay of cues and MR” (1996: 141). Fairclough asserts that MR is not strictly background knowledge for that would be far too restrictive a term as many of the assumptions are ideological which would make 'knowledge' a misleading term (1996: 141-142).

2.2.5.2. Dimensions and elements

Interpretation has six major domains: situational context, intertextual context, surface of utterance, meaning of utterance, local coherence, and text structure and 'point' (1996: 142). Members' resources have six major elements that function as interpretative procedures: social orders; interactional history; phonology, grammar and vocabulary; semantics and pragmatics; cohesion and pragmatics; and schemata (1996: 142). Between the interpretative procedures – the members' resources – and the actual interpretation are resources that are drawn upon in the actual interpretation process (1996: 142). These domains and elements are summarized in Table 2 below.

<i>Interpretative procedures (MR)</i>	<i>Resources</i>	<i>Interpreting</i>
Social orders →		← Situational context
Interactional history →		← Intertextual context
Phonology, grammar, vocabulary →		← Surface of utterance
Semantics, pragmatics →		← Meaning of utterance
Cohesion, pragmatics →		← Local coherence
Schemata →		← Text structure and 'point'

Table 2. Six major domains of interpretation and six major elements of members' resources (1996: 142)

Fairclough starts the description of the interpretation procedure with the last four domains: surface of utterance, meaning of utterance, local coherence, and text structure and 'point' (1996: 143). The first interpretative level that concerns the surface of utterance relates to the process through which interpreters convert sounds or marks on paper into recognizable text using their phonology, grammar and vocabulary; it is of little importance

in CLS (1996: 143). On the second interpretative level concerning the meaning of utterance, the interpreters rely on semantics and pragmatics to assign meanings to constituent parts of text or 'utterances' that often – but not always – correspond to sentences or semantic propositions (1996: 143). The third level, local coherence, establishes meaning connections between utterances and creates coherent interpretations, this requires MR concerning cohesion and pragmatics (1996: 143-144). The fourth level looks for the text structure and 'point', working out how the text 'hangs' together, and this requires matching the text with schemata, representations of characteristic patterns of organization that refer to discourse types (1996: 144). For example, once an interpreter recognizes she is reading a review of poetry, she knows to expect certain parts of text such as references to a book, quotes, author's opinions on said book etc (1996: 144). The 'point' of a text is its summary interpretation and topic (1996: 144).

The upper two interpretation domains concern situational context and intertextual context – the first cues the interpreter into selecting the appropriate discourse types and interpretation procedures and the second allows the discourse participants to operate on the basis of assumptions on the links between the current discourse and any previous discourses, determining what can be 'commonly' done in such a discourse type (1996: 144-145). In this thesis, the situational context is the American poetry culture.

All the domains and procedures are interlinked: any interpretation contributes to MR by becoming the basis for future interpretations and is at the same time influenced by previous interpretations and other MR (1996: 145). Also, all levels of interpretations work in a hermeneutic circle, since in order to interpret global coherence one must draw upon local coherence of textual parts and, conversely, the early impression of global coherence will influence local interpretation of specific constituents (1996: 145). A similar process occurs in the interpretation of text and context (1996: 145).

2.2.5.3. Intertextual context and presuppositions

Discourses and texts do not start in a vacuum and are not isolated: they have histories, predecessors and series and interpretation of context can determine which series the text belongs to and what therefore is presupposed by the participants (1996: 152). While the interpretation of the participants may be similar, a dominant or more powerful participant may impose his or her reading on others, thus power in discourse can mean power over presuppositions (1996: 152). Presuppositions as if tell at least most people

what they already know, handing them snippets of supposedly antecedent texts they have already experienced (1996: 153). Of course, these might not exist and therefore the text author may actually try to get the reader or audience to attribute to their experience things that the author wants them to accept and, because presuppositions are not explicit, it is sometimes difficult for the reader or audience to identify and reject them (1996: 153-154). Thus presuppositions can be sincere and manipulative, but also ideological, assuming that the reader or audience with 'common sense' would accept the proposition (1996: 154). And instead of reinforcing presuppositions, the text author can negate them, assuming that the reader or audience has experienced the propositions under attack in antecedent texts; yet negation can also be sincere, manipulative or ideological (1996: 154). Inventing a 'straw man' like in *Why would we ever want to presume that poetry lost all relevance after World War II* implies that this very claim has been made powerfully enough for the author to try and 'save' poetry from such hostile claims. In any case, presuppositions establish a 'dialogue' between the text author and other authors, creating intertextuality (1996: 155).

2.2.5.4. Frames, scripts, and schemata

Frames, scripts, and schemata are “a family of types of mental representation of aspects of the world”; they are ideologically variable (1996: 158). Schemata concern the activity of a particular type – the 'larger-scale textual structures' or social behavior modes like a phone conversation or a newspaper report that have predictable elements in a predictable sequence –, while frames refer to entities in the natural and social world that can figure as the topic or subject matter in such an activity, and scripts represent the subjects of the activity and their relationships (1996: 158-159). All three terms refer to broad dimensions of highly complex networks and can therefore often overlap (1996: 159).

2.2.5.5. Topic and point

The difference between the topic and the point of a text is that the topic summarizes the experiential aspect of the text – the 'content' – while the point can include relational and expressive dimensions, offering implicit propositions that depend on the interpreter's MR to decode (1996: 160).

2.2.5.6. Summary of situational and intertextual context issues

Fairclough summarizes situational and intertextual context issues with three questions that the analyst can employ:

1. Context: what interpretation(s) are participants giving to the situational and

intertextual contexts?

2. Discourse type(s): what discourse type(s) are being drawn upon (the rules, systems or principles of phonology, grammar, sentence cohesion, vocabulary, semantics and pragmatics; and schemata, frames and scripts)?

3. Difference and change: are answers to questions 1 and 2 different for different participants? And do they change during the course of the interaction? (1996: 162)

I will be using these questions implicitly in the interpretation phase.

2.2.6. Explanation

2.2.6.1. Introduction

The stage of explanation is necessary to explicate the relations of power, ideology and domination that are implicit in 'common sense' assumptions of the participants' MR and discourse types (1996: 162). While interpretation deals with how MR are used in discourse processing, the explanatory stage is interested in the social institution and change of MR and their reproduction in discourse (1996: 162). Social structures shape MR that in turn shape discourses while discourse sustains or changes MR, thereby sustaining or changing social structures (1996: 162). In Fairclough's methodology, social structures equal relations of power and social processes and practices equal social struggle (1996: 162). Thus the explanatory stage is about viewing discourse through the prism of social struggle within the matrix of power relations (1996: 162).

2.2.6.2. Explanation process

This stage has two dimensions: on the one hand, discourses are part of social struggles so we can contextualize them in terms of the effects of these struggles on structures; on the other hand, power relations determine discourses, but these relations are themselves results of previous struggles and are established and naturalized by those in power (1996: 162). The effects on discourse and the social determinants of discourse should both be analyzed on three levels of social organization: the societal level, the institutional level, and the situational level (1996: 162).

This does not mean that every discourse contains conflict, because social struggle does not have to stand for open warfare – even a discourse where the participants eventually interpret the situation almost identically, using the same MR and discourse types, can be an effect of power relations (1996: 164). As Fairclough points out, a 'perfectly harmonious' and ordinary conversation between two married people might

express powerful patriarchal social relations both in the family and the society at large, betraying the implicit propositions and presuppositions (1996: 164). The three levels mean that every discourse can be seen differently according to the level chosen; it's not that the analyst is looking at different features of the discourse, but rather that the same discourse is looked at from different perspectives (1996: 164).

Every discourse may reproduce its own social determinants and MR or it may transform to them to a greater or lesser degree – the former means a *productive* relationship between the discourse producer and his or her MR and the latter means a *creative* relationship (1996: 165). The choice between the relationships depends on the situation as unproblematic situations (where the participants can easily and harmoniously interpret the discourse) associate with normative relationships and problematic situations with creative relationships (1996: 165). If things are not clear, MR may not provide helpful norms and prepared solutions and this mismatch between the situation and the familiar types forces the participants to approach MR creatively (1996: 165). Such situations typically arise when social struggle becomes overt and thrusts into crisis both the MR and the power relations themselves (1996: 165).

Fairclough cautions that a close exploration of discourse determinants and effects on institutional and social levels may lead easily into detailed sociological analysis, but there are practical limitations to taking discourse studies too far in that direction (1996: 166). There is no rule of thumb, though, and in some cases even a general description of the institution and society in terms of social groupings and relationships may suffice for the formation of a social matrix for the discourse (1996: 166).

The stage of explanation can be summarized in three questions:

1. Social determinants: what power levels at situational, institutional and societal levels help shape this discourse?
2. Ideologies: what elements of MR which are drawn upon have an ideological character?
3. Effects: how is this discourse positioned in relation to struggles at the situational, institutional and societal levels? Are these struggles overt or covert? Is the discourse normative with respect to MR or creative? Does it contribute to sustaining existing power relations, or transforming them? (1996: 166)

2.2.7. About the production of texts

The reason that people have for producing texts is in Fairclough's wording "the resolution of problems of various sorts in [the text producers'] relationship to the world and to others" (1996: 169-170). Such problems are categorized into problems with contents, relations and subjects (1996: 170). In case of contents, a discrepancy arises between the text producer's ideological common-sense perception of the world and the world itself (1996: 170). For example, a fervent believer in the widespread popularity of poetry might struggle to explain a recent study concerning the lack of awareness of poetry. Problems with relations refer to social relations between the text producer and interpreter(s), such as with the producer and the audience being of different sex (1996: 170). A problematic position concerning subjects has to do with the subject position or social identity of either the text producer or the interpreter(s) (1996: 170). The producers experience problems because of the 'destructuring' of orders of discourse – familiar ways are no longer straightforwardly available (1996: 171). Restructuring the orders of discourse may require putting together familiar discourse types in novel combinations; this could be evident in the formal text features that contain traces of the production process and if such a process combined diverse discourse types, we might also find diversity in the traces (1996: 171). Fairclough points out that sometimes the producers manage to seamlessly integrate the various discourse types and one outcome might be a new discourse type: for example, advertising is nowadays a seamlessly naturalized and integrated combination of face-to-face and 'public' discourse types (1996: 171). Yet the main focus of the discourse analysis is not on the existence but the essence of the production problems – their main determinants and effects lie in the struggles between social groupings (1996: 172). Seemingly individual attempts to resolve problems can be seen as moves in a social struggle made to rectify the orders of discourse (1996: 172). This is what Fairclough terms 'the social nature of individual creativity'; the creativity of the subject is socially determined and also socially constitutive in a dialectical process of social fixation and transformation (1996: 172).

2.3. Criticism of CLS

As a prominent figure in the field of discourse studies, Norman Fairclough has obviously attracted a lot of attention with his CLS/CDA method and has also encountered criticism. The majority of such criticism (see e.g. Poole 2010, Widdowson 2004, O'Regan

2006) seems to be divided into three main charges: 1) Fairclough is inconsistent in his use of such terms as 'discourse'; 2) Fairclough's CLS is not 'critical' at all, in fact it analyzes arbitrarily chosen texts through biased prism, reaching the kind of results the bias would have predicted anyway; and 3) Fairclough's CLS analysis of texts seems sometimes to hinge on lexical semantics and the results are highly debatable.

Regardless of whether Fairclough himself would consider such criticism fair and warranted or not, some of the aspects highlighted do at least pose a serious minefield for the CLS/CDA analyst and must be taken into account if only to steer clear of the dangers pointed out by the critics.

2.3.1. Inconsistent term usage

The first accusation of inconsistent term usage can be summarized through the work of Brian Poole. Poole (2010) refers to Fairclough's claim that his method's main purpose is to disclose and uncover assumptions and selective language that might go unnoticed by the general reader: CLS/CDA is “intended to reveal such discourses in texts which the uninitiated reader might understand as encapsulating prevailing orthodoxies, or 'commonsense' [*sic!*] views of the contemporary world” (Poole 2010: 140). However, Poole reminds us that it is important to specify the kind of discourse Fairclough has in mind and points out that, unlike Foucault, Fairclough stresses the linguistic aspects of discourse and uses 'discourse' sometimes interchangeably with 'language' (Poole 2010: 142). The same 'felicitous ambiguity' that Fairclough (1996: 28) praises in the terminology of CLS/CDA can be a source of confusion as well.

2.3.2. Biased and arbitrary analysis

Perhaps a more serious charge than term-related confusion is the accusation, made originally by H. G. Widdowson (2004) and later repeated by Poole (2010), that CLS/CDA seems to ignore the fact that readers may interpret texts differently and instead opts for a too deterministic view of the effects texts have on the audience. Widdowson has been one of Fairclough's most persistent critics and this has led to some personal attacks, but, as Poole notes, exasperation and name-calling do not invalidate Widdowson's arguments (Poole 2010: 147). One of Widdowson's main points is that CLS/CDA can only yield interpretations that may carry conviction within the same discourse community, but cannot be validated by analysis (Widdowson 2004: 103). He states that what CLS/CDA analysts uncover “are the workings and effects of texts on readers who are pretextually positioned

to derive discourses from them which suit their purpose” (Widdowson 2004: 103). In short, a CDA analyst has the danger of setting out to analyze hand-picked texts in order to find exactly what he or she is looking for – but this does not mean a final or single interpretation of a given text. Brian Poole refers to Widdowson's parallel between CLS/CDA and literary criticism, noting that their ways of approaching and describing texts are “very similar” and the only difference is in the pretexts which in case of literary criticism is aesthetical and for CLS/CDA political (Poole 2010: 147). John P. O'Regan asks how we are “supposed to *know* on theoretical grounds that our perspective is the “correct” one” (emphasis original), but finds no answer in CLS/CDA's theoretical basis (O'Regan 2006: 233).

Brian Poole also points out that CDA appears to take a deterministic view of the effect of textual features on readers and does not make sufficient use of psycholinguistic evidence (Poole 2010: 152). Poole believes that CDA's greatest shortcoming is that it only addresses certain discourse types and does so in a manner that is not genuinely 'critical', he suggest rectifying this by “reading against the grain of *all* texts, searching for the hidden attitudes and assumptions behind *all* arguments, and weighing the strengths and weaknesses of *all* theories” (emphasis original) (Poole 2010: 152). It is precisely this approach that I hope to use in my own analysis, eschewing Fairclough's inclination towards left-leaning analysis. My reading of the selected texts is not directed at disclosing capitalist or neo-capitalist or neo-liberalist effects in poetry criticism, it is about disclosing presuppositions of any kind.

2.3.3. Intuitive observations on lexical semantics

The third accusation concerns lexical semantics. Brian Poole suggests that one danger with Fairclough's CDA is that some findings in the analysis might be merely intuitive observations on lexical semantics (Poole 2010: 144). Considering that Fairclough has openly said that he is a socialist and critical of capitalism (Poole 210: 139), his readings can be biased towards one or the other result. Although CDA can be used to analyze any discourse, Fairclough himself believes that its task is to expose the ways in how language and meaning are used by the powerful to dominate the powerless (Poole 2010: 143). Poole, however, points out that Fairclough sometimes analyzes texts as if he himself were the intended reader, finding oppressive overtones or questionable wording in texts that might not be perceived this way by the actual intended audience: pregnant

women for whom a particular brochure was written might not take offense at a sentence stating that smaller women “have a slightly smaller pelvis than tall women – *which is not surprising*” (Poole 2010: 145, emphasis mine). Fairclough believes that the phrase 'which is not surprising' comes across as a 'tagged-on comment', but Poole asks whether such things come across this way to both pregnant readers and Fairclough or to Fairclough alone (Poole 2010: 145). Fairclough's own readings might therefore be improved if he did not place special emphasis on his own interpretation and investigated empirically the reactions of the actual audience sample (Poole 2010: 145). As Poole politely quips: “In reading Fairclough's work, one gains the strong impression that it is actually his self-declared socialism [...] rather than 'close linguistic analysis' which is the wellspring” (Poole 2010: 146). In order to avoid this danger, a CDA analyst should therefore approach a text without any preconceived desire to dismantle its structure in order to reveal the inevitable oppression or deceit. This does not mean that a text cannot be a site of social struggle but that an analyst must take special care not to impose his or her own preconceived notions on a text.

2.3.4. Response to criticism of Fairclough's CLS

The first accusation that Fairclough is inconsistent in his use of such terms as 'discourse' is perhaps unjust considering the plethora of definitions for the term – Sara Mills has noted that “[discourse] has perhaps the widest range of possible significations of any term in literary and cultural theory, and yet it is often the term within theoretical texts which is least defined” (Mills 1997: 1). In fact, considering that Fairclough himself offers a relatively clear-cut definition of *his* use of the term (1996: 20-22), he at least pins down his version of the word. It also sounds strange to accuse him of employing the term differently from Michel Foucault (Poole 2010: 142) when Fairclough emphasizes that his term is closely related to language (1996: 28).

The second accusation that Fairclough's CLS is not 'critical' at all, analyzing convenience samples through the position of the analyst, is also questionable on the background of critical discourse analysis methods. As Carl Auerbach and Louise Silverstein state, theoretical sampling – that is, selecting a research sample for refining a theory – is useful when looking for “transferable constructs about a research concern” and allows for “in-depth exploration of constructs in different contexts” (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003: 92). A qualitative, in-depth analysis of a text by an analyst is far from

'useless': Auerbach and Silverstein remark that even though the representatives in the theoretical sample represent only themselves, useful knowledge can come from such study, leading to a theoretical construct (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003: 94). As they say, "the purpose is not to achieve generalizability, but to understand the construct further" and future investigations can then be based on the initial findings (Auerbach & Silverstein 2003: 95).

The third accusation that Fairclough's CLS analysis appears to somehow 'hinge' on semantics and leads to highly debatable results appears to depend on the analyst's goal and skills. CLS does require extremely careful application of the method to minimize the analyst's own bias, but Fairclough stresses that the analyst is very much a part of process, a reader of the text who brings his/her members' resources to the table (1996: 141). It is the task and duty of the analyst to continuously alternate between what he terms 'global' and 'local' coherence (see article 2.2.5.2 in this chapter) in order to accurately observe the processes going on in the discourse(s) (1996: 145).

2.4. Data

The sampling method for this thesis used a convenience sample selected from a pool of publications and magazines dealing with poetry criticism. Since this thesis was not interested in observing the progress of a poet or comparing the articles of critics to the poet's actual status, the initial pool was relatively large, containing any and all publications that published poetry criticism in the 1990s about living, contemporary American poets.

2.4.1. Selection of sources

The first issue in sampling was the selection of sources for articles – the number of publications dealing at least to some extent with poetry in the English language is enormous. Also, cultural differences dictated that unless I was going to compare poetry criticism in various cultural spaces and countries, it made sense to narrow the selection down to one English-speaking country – in my case, the U.S. This still left a large number of sources. However, since time frame was also important due to the sheer number of potential articles, I decided on the 1990s – the last decade is perhaps too recent and the 1990s language is still something I can analyze as a contemporary.

A crucial aspect of sampling was the accessibility of sources. As stated above, I was not looking at particular people or publications which meant that I could select texts with one of the few criteria being that the sources be at least on the level of expert periodicals. I

did not include in my selection blogs or other minor publications or major newspapers that occasionally print one or two poetry reviews a year, for example. Most of the sources on my shortlist were either major U.S. poetry periodicals or specialized magazines. These were whittled down through a simple test of accessibility – those requiring paid access or having insufficient online archives were cast aside. Of the sources that corresponded to most criteria, three remained as robust candidates: the *Boston Review*, *Jacket 2* and the *Poetry Magazine*.

The available articles did not occasionally chronologically overlap which, again, was not a problem, because I was not comparing critics or issues or treatment of certain poets. In terms of the articles in the 1990s, the *Boston Review* starts in 1993 and runs until 2000; *Jacket 2* only came into existence in 1997; and the *Poetry Magazine* has been in print between 1990-2000, but its online archive is restricted to the period 1990-1997 due to copyright disagreements with JSTOR (personal communication 2013).

2.4.2. Sample

The selection criteria were as follows:

- The articles were chosen randomly from roughly the middle of the 1990s (1994-1997), with the exception of articles from *Jacket 2* that were from 1998-1999;
- The review had to concern a living poet, regardless of his/her age – this ruled out, for example, a 1999 article about the poet Jack Spicer (who died in 1968), but not a 1995/96 article about Josephine Jacobsen (born in 1908) who published a collection in 1995;
- The review had to concern an American poet – this ruled out, for example, a 1996 review of Guillaume Apollinaire, but not a 1996 review of Jorie Graham who is considered to be American, despite the fact that she spent her childhood and part of her university years in Europe (Ramke 1996);
- The length of the texts from different sources was supposed to be roughly similar – reviews in the *Poetry Magazine* were shorter than in the other sources, which is why the proportion of *Poetry Magazine* articles is larger.

The selection was made in four 'sets' – I initially chose set 1 (*Boston Review* June/September 1996; *Jacket 2* January 1998; *Poetry Magazine* January 1995) in order to test my initial approach to categorization (see article 3.4 in chapter 3). When this proved insufficient, I reanalyzed the texts and, satisfied with the results, went on to select sets 2, 3,

and 4. After the analysis was complete, I disregarded one text, because while it did discuss contemporary poets, it did so through a discussion of their early days in the 1970s.

The final sample was a total of 47 texts by 26 authors:

Magazine	Reviewers
<i>Boston Review</i> (14 reviews)	February/March 1995 (2 reviewers about 2 poets) Marie Howe; Joshua Weiner December 1995/January 1996 (4 reviewers about 3 poets and 1 anthology) Ellen Davis; Joe Oesterhaus; David Gewanter; Catherine A. Salmons June/September 1996 (3 reviewers about 3 poets) Richard Howard; Donald Revell; Bin Ramke December 1997/January 1998 (3 reviewers about 5 poets) Brian Lennon; John Yau; Thomas M. Disch
<i>Jacket 2</i> (10 reviews)	January 1998 (1 reviewer about 1 poet) Marjorie Perloff April 1999 (5 reviewers about 5 poets) Alice Notley; Andrew Joron; Dale Smith; Juliana Spahr; Tom Clark July 1999 (4 reviewers about 4 poets) Forrest Gander; Dale Smith; Patrick Pritchett; Jack Kimball
<i>Poetry Magazine</i> (23 reviews)	February 1994 (1 reviewer about 5 poets) Thomas M. Disch July 1994 (1 reviewer about 5 poets) David Baker January 1995 (1 reviewer about 7 poets) David Wojahn August 1995 (1 reviewer about 6 poets) Richard Tillinghast
TOTAL:	47 reviews written by 26 reviewers

Table 3. Sample

3 RESULTS

3.1. General notes

3.1.1. Reflexivity, data-driven approach, and abductive reasoning

According to Paul Baker and Sibonile Ellece, *reflexivity* is the process of reflecting on the research process during its implementation and is an integral part of discourse analysis in order to be self-aware of the analyst's position and to compensate for possible inherent researcher bias (Baker & Ellece 2010: 112-113). This is an crucial aspect of critical discourse analysis and has also been emphasized by Fairclough (1996: 145).

Another important aspect of discourse analysis is the *data-driven approach* where the analyst approaches data with an 'open mind', allowing the analysis to be directed by whatever appears interesting, salient or frequent about the data (Baker & Ellece 2010: 29). In the context of this thesis, such a bottom-up approach enables me to observe the corpus for any salient features that would then either confirm or disprove the existence of any patterns in the texts. Here it would also be useful to note the application of *abductive reasoning* whereby an utterance is understood through an inference to the most plausible explanation (Irmer 2011: 39). This is again a key feature of CLS.

3.1.2. Notes about the sources

Many of the reviewers are themselves published poets and, in some cases, the reviewer in one magazine's issue might be the reviewee in another magazine – for example, Donald Revell was reviewed by David Baker for the *Poetry Magazine* (1994) and himself reviewed Karen Volkman for the *Boston Review* (1996). The fact that a number of the authors are poets might explain the relatively poetic language many reviews used. For example, the *Boston Review* passage “[T]his is a spooky, unsettling book, muted like a trumpet can be muted, haunted by women who have not told, who will not tell, cannot tell – but who speak anyway: hoping we'll get it by what they do not say, or by the look in their eyes we cannot see” (Howe 1995) was written by Marie Howe who was already a published poet by that time (Poets.org 2013a). Even more characteristic is the *Boston Review* passage “Out of a children's book, allegory hurries towards history and towards the sprawl of misremembered detail” (Revell 1996) by Donald Revell, a poet who by that time had published 5 collections and won several prizes (Poets org 2013b).

3.1.2.1. *Boston Review*

The *Boston Review* articles in general include far more direct quotes compared to reviews in the other two sources. It is not infrequent for a *Boston Review* text to include a whole section or 20 lines of a long poem. *Boston Review* articles attempt to interpret authors through their own works and themes – for example, a collection talking about heights and metaphysics means the review will also employ these and related themes in its text. Articles in the *Boston Review* are carried by strong synecdoche: the poet-person is treated as if the complete representation of his/her person and previous works, the person and his/her oeuvre are synonymous.

Due to the idiosyncratic approach, *Boston Review* texts generally lack a unifying, repeating set of categories or themes. Reviews are often written by another poet and are frequently, explicitly poetic. When Richard Howard describes “the removal of [W. S. Merwin's] consciousness from the circumstance which is perceived to be one that will continue without him, an energy or just a propriety, a tempering that transcends anything so dubious, so mythical as “self”” (Howard 1996) or when Donald Revell claims that Karen Volkman “poises her words upon sharp antitheses, improvising the moments of her freedom upon the brink of ruinous form” (Revell 1996), the language of the review itself could pass for poetry.

Interestingly, there is a tangible shift in the reviewing style in the *Boston Review* texts from 1996 and 1997/98. The earlier *Boston Review* articles are unusual in their relative lack of direct criticism. The reviews analyzed are often positive throughout, whereas the latter reviews frequently contain notable charges of major flaws. This discrepancy cannot be attributed to mere respect, such as when the reviewer is analyzing a book by a famous poet (Jorie Graham, W. S. Merwin, John Peck, Alfred Corn), because such respect is sometimes not shown – while Brian Lennon finds no fault with John Peck's collection (Lennon 1996), Thomas M. Disch is not afraid to say about Alfred Corn that the “component of genius emblemized by Kafka in the longer poem is strained by comparison; Corn is not an ace at angst” (Disch 1997/1998). Nor can it be attributed to gentleness toward newcomers – the award-winning poet Donald Revell welcomes Karen Volkman with praise like “Volkman's wonderful *Crash's Law* continues the precarious election to poems American not only in name, but in querulous, precipitous, instantaneous location” (Revell 1996), yet John Yau warns equally unknown Joshua Clover, Jennifer

Moxley and Jeff Clark that “Diderot distinguished between the “theatrical” and the “dramatic,” a distinction that proves useful in discussing the work of Clark, Clover, and Moxley, and suggests one of the pitfalls awaiting a young poet” (Yau 1997/98). This distinct tonal shift might be down to an editorial policy change or the random pairing of author and reviewer, but is interesting nonetheless.

However, even when pointing at specific flaws, the overall tone in the *Boston Review* articles is supportive and their conclusions express approval: “[s]till, there's not only humor [...] in *Madonna anno domini*, but also a wonderful inventiveness with image, metaphor, description, and pun” (Yau 1997/98). Even a relatively seriously criticized Joshua Clover deserves attention, because when his stylistic effects “all work together, Clover takes readers places they haven't been, or known, before” (Yau 1997/98).

The *Boston Review* reviews generally do not adhere to a common template. Some reviewers prefer to hinge their text on a handful of strong themes; others treat the collection under discussion as a license to muse on much wider issues.

Richard Howard's (1996) review of W. S. Merwin's collection *The Vixen* is representative of the first type, offering a rather 'rounded' article with relatively straightforward themes such as Merwin's links with world literature or his venerable age and erudition. At times, Howard's review reads more like a letter of recommendation or a justification of an awarded prize. Donald Revell's (1996) thoughts on Karen Volkman's *Crash's Law*, however, are in sharp contrast, branching in multiple directions and embracing dozens of themes. Revell's review bypasses much of the discussion on why Volkman's poetry is good (though he does praise it in no uncertain terms), preferring to exploit the metaphor of falling included in her title to play even poems seemingly unrelated with falling or balance through this filter. Revell stresses that Volkman's metaphor can be expanded to all of poetry (“Poetry is the elective act of an instant, a precarious balancing act upon the edges dividing body from soul, ecstasy from sense, wild frontier silences from slow words”) and finds in her collection plentiful references to balance as the essence of poetry; to the fall in both the actual and religious sense (“The Shining City tumbles”); and to the decline as a symbol of America's current plight (“Before its first fall, America balanced upon the edge”) (Revell 1996).

3.1.2.2. Jacket 2

Jacket 2 reviews appear to belong to the type of text that is not so much an analytical

dissection of good/bad poetry than a discussion of the virtues of particular authors. Unlike *Boston Review* texts, the *Jacket 2* texts frequently talk about the poet-person, extolling his/her personal strengths and commendable behavior (such as grass-roots activism) – in this sense, an author's poetry is an extension of his/her person. A colorful and zany poet like Kenward Elmslie writes poetry that is characterized by “wild funniness, theatricality, brazenness, its love of art and objects” (Notley 1999) while politically active Lewis MacAdams's poetry has the “nerve to address powerful interests [and] presents a classic example of American dissent, surfacing again in this desert city” (Smith 1999).

In fact, a *Jacket 2* review might be more like a letter of support for a particular cause, school of poetry or political cause. In one of the analyzed texts, Marjorie Perloff uses the case of John Ashbery to scathingly and vigorously defend the very existence of postmodernism as a school of poetry in the face of those who believe it to be no more than “attenuated modernism” (Perloff 1998). In the aforementioned review of Lewis MacAdams, a poet who actively campaigned for the restoration of the Los Angeles River, Dale Smith supports his cause, explaining that “MacAdams introduces us to the complex history of the Los Angeles River, with its political web of brokers who have mongered its resources throughout the century” (Smith 1999). In *Jacket 2* texts, therefore, an in-depth discussion of the style or imagery of the collection under review might be far more subdued than in the *Boston Review* or the *Poetry Magazine* for example.

This does not mean, however, that *Jacket 2* ignores style altogether in favor of political causes. On the contrary, Perloff's (1998) impassioned defense of John Ashbery is buttressed by a detailed examination of postmodernist poetry through the example of Ashbery's style and the latter half of Perloff's article is a line-by-line examination of a specific Ashbery poem.

A more accurate description of a *Jacket 2* type of review is a merger of meta-level discussion and close reading. For example, Juliana Spahr (1999) uses her article on Bernadette Mayer to look both at her treatment of sonnets and also to comment on love poetry in general and the sonnet's gendered and controversial history in particular. She joins the poet in critiquing the form of the sonnet itself, praising Mayer for subverting the form and examining gender issues: “Mayer realizes that breaking conventional sexuality's limitations means bombing to widen the hole of desire and also doing the same to forms” (Spahr 1999). As with *Boston Review*, the *Jacket 2* authors frequently take cue from the

title or themes in the poetry collection. Spahr's discussion of gender and literary form involves military terminology ("When love is aligned with a bomb, even if it is a harmless bomb, it is no longer the concentrated ricochet of Sappho"), because this is also a prevalent theme in Mayer's collection (Spahr 1999).

3.1.2.3. *Poetry Magazine*

The *Poetry Magazine* reviews analyzed followed the same pattern – one author reviews 6-7 poets in one text, linking the discussions of individual collections both through syntax and thought. Another unifying feature is that, like *Jacket 2* texts, the reviewers of the *Poetry Magazine* generally discuss poetry through the poets. However, unlike the *Boston Review* and *Jacket 2*, *Poetry Magazine* reviews can be quite critical and sometimes even scathing. For example, David Wojahn thinks that Andrew Hudgins "retells an interminable string of singularly non-PC (and often singularly unfunny) entries from the Hudgins Joke Book" and opines that "a writer [like Alane Rollings] whose method is so similar from poem to poem should probably not offer us a hundred-page collection" (Wojahn 1995). Considering that all poets in a particular issue are reviewed by the same author and earn merely a few pages, compared to the *Boston Review* and *Jacket 2* articles that can be several times longer, a *Poetry Magazine* review might seem quite harsh in comparison with the other two sources. Yet this is heavily dependent on the disposition of the reviewer – David Wojahn's (1995) treatment of 7 authors is markedly more severe and critical than Richard Tillinghast's (1995) discussion of 6 authors. Tillinghast frequently has no direct complaints and sometimes 'hijacks' the review to criticize literary theory ("Oliver's poetry [...] floats above and around the schools and controversies of contemporary American poetry") or prevailing trends ("May Sarton's new book succeeds wonderfully in touching the reader directly, without a sense of poetic artifice, image, metaphor, or a dense overlay of linguistic texture") (Tillinghast 1995). David Wojahn, on the other hand, usually – but not always – focuses narrowly on the poet under discussion (Wojahn 1995).

The relative harshness of the *Poetry Magazine* reviews is tempered with concessions and direct praise, such as when Wojahn notes that Stephen Dunn, an author whose individual collections have thus far "tended to be over-long [...] and a bit repetitive", is also "a gifted talker, a kind of querulous raconteur and even his less successful poems are highly readable" (Wojahn 1995). Similarly, Tillinghast may lead the reader towards a

negative opinion (“Debra Greger’s [collection] did not, in its first few poems, seem to be a book I was going to like very much”) and continue pointing at its weakness (“I was not particularly taken with a dramatic monologue in the voice of Miranda, from *The Tempest* [...] nor with poems invoking works of art by the painter Vermeer and the sculptor Canova”), only to suddenly pivot in a far more positive direction (“The book contains other priceless instants where the mundane flares up into the miraculous – many more than I can mention in this space”) and end on a highly supportive note – “From now on I will be eagerly looking for new poems by her” (Tillinghast 1995).

Despite the disproportionate size of the reviews – some poets are reserved 3-4 pages in the aggregate text, others receive one page – *Poetry Magazine* reviews do not correlate proportion with assessment. A one-page discussion of May Sarton is strongly supportive (“At its best the poetry in May Sarton’s new book succeeds wonderfully in touching the reader directly”) and praises her long career (“May Sarton has clearly won this limpidity of expression over the course of a lifetime’s work”) (Tillinghast 1995).

Unlike the *Boston Review* articles, authors in the *Poetry Magazine* do not generally write poetry under the guise of criticism. The creative approach of the *Boston Review*, such as Bin Ramke’s assertion that “[t]he arrow of time is inexorable, and the danger of dynamism is corruption and dissolution, which one can only delay, not deter” (Ramke 1996) would perhaps sound out of sync with the analytical *Poetry Magazine* approach where David Wojahn is more like a scholarly commentator in his assessment that David Ignatow’s work is “notable less for its development than for its tough-minded consistency, for the relentlessness in which Ignatow reiterates his pet themes” (Wojahn 1995).

And, unlike in *Jacket 2*, the reviewers of the *Poetry Magazine* steer clear of political causes, though not from debates on literary theory and schools of poetry. In fact, David Wojahn and Richard Tillinghast both use their aggregate reviews to convey personal opinions as when Wojahn expresses his relief that “Dunn’s variations on Horatian odes and epodes are rarely the drab reportorial missives from the daily grind which are found in so much contemporary poetry” (Wojahn 1995) or when Tillinghast quips that Philip Booth’s collection is good to read because of its author’s “disinclination to tailor the poems to a certain theme, or to stretch in his search for new elements” (Tillinghast 1995). While meta-level critique of the state of contemporary poetry is by no means a dominant theme in the *Poetry Magazine* reviews, such implicit notes are definitely present in the analysis of many

poets and, interestingly, often in the form of defense ('this author, unlike so many others, has not yielded to cheap tricks or popular themes').

3.2. Analysis of the reviewed texts

In order to analyze the texts, I employed Norman Fairclough's CLS method as described in the previous chapter, examining phrases for their experiential, relational and expressive values, and metaphor content. While all aspects were looked at, the focus of this thesis was on experiential values that reveal the author's knowledge and beliefs as these might be especially important in implicit norm creation.

At first I also tested an approach whereby every noun, adjective, verb and adverbial would be categorized according to their meaning (words like 'bullet' and 'shoot' could therefore be categorized as 'military terms', for example) in order to reveal specific themes in the text. However, this robbed words of their context and, crucially, their relevance to the implicit norm creation. The only approach that seemed to preserve the critical part of context was the categorization of phrases or, if necessary, a set of sentences that would otherwise lose their context upon separation. An example of a phrase would be “One of Bernard's most chilling effects derives from haunting scenes like this” (Baker 1994) – here the example from Bernard's poetry has been omitted, because the phrase retains its context even without it. An example of a set of phrases would be “And break apart they do, these poems. Only to recover themselves, in the nick of time, with a laughing pirouette, or a grave and formal bow” (Pritchett 1999) – here the second sentence is connected closely to the first. Such linked phrases or sentences form a whole, a cohesive image or scene.

The titles of the categories depended on the specific article's tone and context, but some categories were almost universal, cropping up in the majority of texts due to their general nature. Such categories included, for example, 'Style', 'Direct praise', 'Direct criticism' or 'Literary references'. However, no category could be assigned for every single text.

3.4.1. Experiential values

Fairclough describes experiential values as “a trace of and a cue to the way in which the text producer's experience of the natural or social world is represented,” the expression of the author's knowledge and beliefs (Fairclough 1996: 112). As opinion pieces, the texts analyzed are clearly strong exponents of their authors' attitudes and much of contents of any one text could be said to carry some degree of experiential value. In terms of implicit

norm creation, experiential values were the key to observing an author's understanding of norms that regulate poetry.

A portion of the texts analyzed stood out in their approach to defining poetry or 'good' poetry. While the texts were often cautious in expressing direct criticism or praise concerning the state of American poetry in general or the status of the particular poet, some authors employed words and phrases that made their views rather explicit. Of particular interest to this paper is the reasoning behind the decisions by these critics. The negativity or positivity in these cases sometimes offers examples of implicit norm creation. The following table highlights examples where the author is criticizing what he/she sees as currently prevailing norms or situation that, for some reason, fail to correspond to the author's understanding of what the situation ought to be like. In some cases, such as with Joe Oesterhaus (1995/96), the author considers some poet to be unfairly excluded from the 'elite'; in other cases, such as with John Yau (1997/98), the author expresses clear dissatisfaction with certain modes of poetry that are – in his/her opinion – unnecessarily popular. Others authors such as Thomas M. Disch (1997/98) point the accusatory finger for the sub-par contemporary situation in poetry at 'many middle-aged poetry bureaucrats' whose taste is inadequate or skewed (whether he means academics or US officials in charge of education and culture is open for interpretation).

Critique of the contemporary situation in American poetry	
"The American lyric mode over the past thirty years has employed the plain style extensively, and it has come under attack lately because many poets forget that it is a rhetoric, not a "natural" expression or mode of pure experience"	David Baker (1994)
"In a poetry culture in which the McPoem so much preponderates that many middle-aged poetry bureaucrats have never tasted anything else, the poetry of John Hollander is dinner at Lutèce"	Thomas M. Disch (1994)
"It is not the regnant mode among poetry academics at the moment, but since at least the time of Byron and Wordsworth it has been the kind of poetry that most commends itself to <i>readers</i> of poetry"	Thomas M. Disch (1997/98)
"The breadth and strength of the collection naturally provoke speculation about why Jacobsen is so infrequently taught and anthologized"	Joe Oesterhaus (1995/96)
"[A]ll three [poets reviewed] write lyrical poetry that departs from such well-known postwar lyric modes as the confessional, anecdotal, exalted, or solipsistic imagism—forms of a debased realism still practiced by many poets"	John Yau (1997/98)

Table 4. Examples: Critique of the contemporary situation in American poetry

As the examples show, however, no consensus existed between the reviewers as to what the exact state of poetry culture was at that time. While some texts lamented the proliferation of 'McPoems' (Disch 1994) or 'debased realism' (Yau 1997/98), others pined for acknowledgment of – in their eyes – undervalued poets (Oesterhaus 1995/96), and yet others thought there was a gap between the 'poetry academics' and the actual readers of

poetry (Disch 1997/98).

A closer examination of an example like that of Thomas M. Disch (1994) reveals several aspects that are of interest to CLS. In terms of the choice of vocabulary, words like 'McPoem' and 'preponderates', and phrases like 'middle-aged poetry bureaucrats' and 'have never tasted' show strong experiential values, leaving little doubt as to the author's opinion on the matter. The collocation of poetry and food, the preponderance of McPoem and John Hollander's poetry as dinner at Lutèce, emphasizes Thomas M. Disch's understanding that, unlike much of his contemporary poetry, Hollander's work is a treat, an exquisite dish to be savored. Relational constructions like 'have never tasted anything else' do not leave room for argument, assume that the reader would agree with Disch and also presume that the reader is not part of the crowd, having better taste in poetry. Interestingly, Disch places both himself and the reader on the margins of the social matrix in 'poetry culture', presupposing that they, along with John Hollander, stand in contrast to the proliferation of bad taste in poetry. Such an overt struggle with the anonymous opponents in poetry (whether we are talking about poets, poetry readers, academics or the mysterious 'poetry bureaucrats') that tries to transform existing power relations was not uncommon in the reviews, cropping up also in texts by David Baker (1994), Joe Oesterhaus (1995/96), John Yau (1997/98), David Gewanter (1995/96), Marjorie Perloff (1998), Alice Notley (1999), Forrest Gander (1999), Dale Smith (1999), Jack Kimball (1999), David Wojahn (1995), and Richard Tillinghast (1995).

The authors' understanding of good poetry or the essence of poetry offers examples where the experiential choices cue us to the author's opinions as seen in Table 2. It is very difficult to come up with a single definition for good poetry that would cover every angle which is why these examples are instructive as to the different preferences of critics. Some, such as Donald Revell (1996) or Andrew Joron (1999) define poetry through a poetic line itself (this might not be unsurprising, considering that both Revell and Joron are experienced poets themselves), whereas authors like John Yau (1997/98) and David Baker (1994) offer definitions that employ more practical advice. Thomas M. Disch (1994) and Patrick Pritchett (1999) combine the two approaches, providing definitions that, on the one hand, are rather practical, yet on the other hand require more interpretation than a simple instruction.

Definition of good poetry	
"The lyric mode will survive and flourish if it is adaptable, pliable, inclusive of elements from other poetic manners, absorbing the rhetorical suggestions of such modes as narrative poetry, speculative poetry, and dramatic poetry"	David Baker (1994)
"[T]here is no matter so trivial it cannot serve for the occasion for a weighty poem, nor any form so strict or so free that it can't be employed for flippancy"	Thomas M. Disch (1994)
"The essence of poetry is, in other words, a coldly stated state of emptiness: a condition marked by disjunct terms, by standards of argumentation or damage, by contingency and absence"	Andrew Joron (1999)
"A poem, any poem, is the result of the author's collaboration with the polyphonic forces of language"	Patrick Pritchett (1999)
"Poetry is the elective act of an instant, a precarious balancing act upon the edges dividing body from soul, ecstasy from sense, wild frontier silences from slow words"	Donald Revell (1996)
"All three poets [Clark, Clover, Moxley] share a belief that the poem must earn its existence, and that the poet can only ensure this possibility, by attending more to the construction of lines and the juxtaposition of words within a line than to the narration of a story"	John Yau (1997/98)

Table 5. Examples: Definition of good poetry

The examples by Andrew Joron (1999), Patrick Pritchett (1999) and Donald Revell (1996) are interesting in the sense of what Norman Fairclough would call 'covert struggle' – while Joron and Revell consider poetry to be a condition of disjunction and in-betweenness, Pritchett calls for a collaboration, a getting-together. In terms of language, all three authors offer strongly relational definitions that assume a commonality of values with the reader and therefore the two definitions set up an ideological clash. And while Pritchett openly qualifies his definition to apply to 'any poem', Joron and Revell presuppose that their definitions also include any and all poetry.

Yet while critics had a hard time agreeing on any one definition of good poetry, it was instructive to look at why they believed a specific collection or work by a poet was good enough for commendation. This relies on their general definition of good poetry, but requires also some elaboration on the norms that these critics use. As with any discussion of implicit or explicit norms, any such categories are relative and pertain to the tastes of the particular critic. The specific reasons the critics use could be categorized as follows:

- Intertextuality
- Comparison with predecessors or peers
- Mastery of language and/or poetic forms
- Venerability or status of the poet
- Humor
- Irony, parody
- Fragmentation, inconstancy
- Observation skills
- Disembodied voice(s)
- Discussion of gender issues
- Erudition
- Originality
- Pastiche

Since these categories can be found in many reviews and in multiple wordings, I

have chosen one or two examples per category.

Reasons for valuing particular poetry	
<i>Intertextuality (found in 26 reviews)</i>	
“Phillips' reworking of Langston Hughes' much-loved poem, “The Negro Speaks of Rivers,” is riveting”	Ellen Davis (1995/96)
“Gizzi's texts often intersect with, and pass through, the works of others”	Andrew Joron (1999)
<i>Comparison with predecessors or peers (25 reviews)</i>	
“But [Rodney Jones] turns as frequently to the rhetoric of drama, of social oratory, as in the long-lined manner of C. K. Williams or a good preacher; he exposes his own rhetorical tactics as piercingly as Jorie Graham; he sings as freely as Gerald Stern, as mournful, as faithful, as exuberantly additive; and he thinks with an unmatched mixture of detail and intelligent abstraction”	David Baker (1994)
<i>Mastery of language and/or poetic forms (21 reviews)</i>	
“There is probably no other poet today who could so well capture and sustain that tone; there is surely no other who would aspire to”	Thomas M. Disch (1994)
<i>Venerability, status (18 reviews)</i>	
“May Sarton has clearly won this limpidity of expression over the course of a lifetime's work”	Richard Tillinghast (1995)
<i>Humor (16 reviews)</i>	
“One of our century's funniest, most moving, and idiosyncratic poets, John Ashbery writes book-length antidotes to the same-old, same-old habits of daily conversation, reportage, and advertising”	Forrest Gander (1999)
<i>Irony, parody (15 reviews)</i>	
“However ironically self-distanced, Whalen's poems are haunted by an odd tone of disappointment”	Tom Clark (1999)
“But the one-time rhyme, embedded in the internally rhyming and alliterating “Only I say: What comes this way. . .” is designedly comic and parodic, just as are Ashbery's centos, pantoums, and sestinas”	Marjorie Perloff (1998)
<i>Fragmentation, inconstancy (14 reviews)</i>	
“Jorie Graham has taken inconstancy, which earlier had been angst and anxiety producing, and made an art from it”	Bin Ramke (1996)
“They have rejected the stable, secure, full-throated “I” of much mainstream poetry of the last half-century in favor of the fragmentary, shifting, destabilized “I” of experimental autobiography investigated in the past two decades”	John Yau (1997/98)
<i>Observation skills (14 reviews)</i>	
“Corn's Labanotation is on a par with that of dance critic Arlene Croce”	Thomas M. Disch (1997/98)
“MacAdams possesses also a focused, journalistic eye for detail and often reveals deep human insight while narrating non-human events”	Dale Smith (1999)
<i>Disembodied voice(s) (13 reviews)</i>	
““M” records the speculations of a frequently disembodied speaker who glides through the topography and history of Asia, the ancient Middle East and Europe”	Brian Lennon (1997/98)
<i>Pastiche (13 reviews)</i>	
““Rock, Scissors, Paper” recalls the great pastiche-epics of Pound and Williams, where the page becomes a sticky wall that voices could cling to”	David Gewanter (1995/96)
<i>Discussion of gender issues (11 reviews)</i>	
“I See a Man,” “The Hustler Speaks of Places,” “King of Hearts,” and “Our Lady,” all look unflinchingly at aspects of homosexual life outside straight America's usual range of vision”	Ellen Davis (1995/96)
“Gorgeous writing and devastating: here are women who do not have language for their own desire, who have never spoken words that describe their own bodies – without language, no memory”	Marie Howe (1995)
<i>Erudition (8 reviews)</i>	

<p>“Phillips is equally at home in classical, Renaissance, and contemporary cultures; myth, iconography, rhetoric, and idioms mesh beautifully in his work”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Ellen Davis (1995/96)</p> <p>“Peck's five previous volumes have been sympathetically reviewed, primarily by a few critics whose acumen is up to the scale of Peck's highbrow voyaging through European classical and Eastern history and myth”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Brian Lennon (1997/98)</p>
<p><i>Originality (5 reviews)</i></p> <p>“It quickly becomes apparent as one reads through the book that Jacobsen aspires to the rarest of statures – the poet whose originality and power force us to rethink the accepted categories of poetic excellence”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Joe Oesterhaus (1995/96)</p> <p>“Elmslie has never done what he was supposed to, and after the nearly forty years this book represents, his poetry can be seen to be unique”</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Alice Notley (1999)</p>

Table 6. Examples: Reasons for valuing particular poetry

Proportionally, then, it appears that the most prominent reasons for highlighting a particular collection of poetry are intertextuality (26 texts) and resemblance to predecessors or notable peers (25 texts). Here it would be interesting to note that comparison with notable predecessors almost never mentioned the political preferences of such persons. That is, comparison of John Peck with Ezra Pound relies on “hermetic modes” (Lennon 1997/98) and comparison of Peter Dale Scott with Pound (Weiner 1995) on his affinity for Chinese poets, not on Pound's controversial political leanings.

Similarly prominent categories, but notably less so, are mastery of language or poetic forms (21 texts) and the poet's venerability or acquired status (18 texts). The following block of categories concerns style – the usage of humor (16 texts), irony or parody (15 texts); the exploitation of fragmented and shifting style (14 texts). Categories also concerning style are the praise of the poet's observation skills (14 texts), the usage of disembodied voice(s) (14 texts), and the exploitation of pastiche (13 texts). Discussion of gender issues (11 texts), whether concerning LGBT themes or the critique of 'traditional' gender roles, was perhaps the only purely content-based category in the midst of form-related praise. Finally, erudition (8 texts) and originality (5) texts of the poet were notable mentions, but clearly not the most prominent reasons for praise.

When looking at the often mentioned categories of intertextuality (26 texts), irony or parody (15), fragmented and shifting style (14), the use of disembodied voice(s) (14) and pastiche (13), one is tempted to refer to the description of postmodernist literature. James McCorkle defines the postmodernist poetics as something that works “through such modes as appropriation, synthesis, renovation, recombination, mutation, and generation” (McCorkle 1997: 44). McCorkle insists that, far from exploiting such techniques for 'ornamental' reasons, postmodernist poetry “insists on heterogeneity, porosity, dialogism”

(McCorkle 1997: 46) – hence, intertextuality on the one hand and fragmentation on the other hand. And Fredric Jameson has noted that pastiche and parody are significant features of postmodernism (Jameson 1998: 4). This does not invariably mean that the critics deliberately pointed out postmodernist tendencies, but it could mean that such tendencies were deemed to be strengths of the poetry under review, leading to the question of whether these were indeed implicit norms the critics looked for in their search for 'good' poetry.

The reasoning behind negative reviews can also be categorized. The sample for this paper included 47 reviews and 13 such reviews could be categorized as negative or partly negative due to sentences such as “Here, especially in the poems of Raab and Hoagland, there are no formal challenges, no musicality, no effort to find the *mot juste* or the telling epithet” (Disch 1994).

When deciding whether a specific review was negative or not, I looked for definitive and conclusive statements such as “[Raab] takes his bad muse's advice in most of his poems, which are pointedly diffident and full of “artless” repetition” (Disch 1994). However, every single reviewer with the sole exception of Thomas M. Disch (1994) found something positive to say about their reviewed collections and even Disch reserved thoroughly negative reviews only for Lawrence Raab's *What We Don't Know About Each Other* and Tony Hoagland's *Sweet Ruin*. All the other texts were mixed reviews such as John Yau's article (1997/98) on Joshua Clover that contained both direct praise (“When they [stylistic effects] all work together, Clover takes readers places they haven't been, or known, before”) and direct criticism (“[I]t's as if Clover's been charmed by his own music and has stopped scrutinizing language, stopped investigating it on the phonemic and syntactic levels”). In Table 5 such reviews are marked with the tag *[mixed review]*. As with the positive categories, this table only includes one or two examples per category.

Reasons for criticizing particular poetry	
<i>Form for form's sake (found in 5 reviews)</i> “Koestenbaum's promise is admittedly considerable, but even he can't sell us on thirty-five pages of asterisks” David Wojahn (1995) [mixed review] “‘At its least successful, it can lead to a declamatory glibness, as in “Union pacific,” where Clover's mantric “Om” becomes a cute trick, the irony of its initial use replaced by the dullness of repetition” John Yau (1997/98) [mixed review]	
<i>Limited range (5 reviews)</i> “‘There are, to be sure, aspects of Ignatow's method which limit his expressive range, not the least of which is an utter lack of music” David Wojahn (1995) [mixed review] “‘The book's main shortcoming is that it goes on too long; a writer whose method is so similar from poem to poem should probably not offer us a hundred-page collection” David Wojahn (1995) [mixed review]	

<i>Excessiveness (4 reviews)</i>	
“This problem has plagued several of Dunn's individual collections, which have tended to be over-long [...] and a bit repetitive”	David Wojahn (1995) [mixed review]
“Seventy pages of this improvisational meditation on music, memory, mums, and so on is a too much for even a writer as interesting as Koestenbaum to ask of us”	David Wojahn (1995) [mixed review]
<i>Inadequate command of language or theme (4 reviews)</i>	
“[Raab] takes his bad muse's advice in most of his poems, which are pointedly diffident and full of “artless” repetition”	Thomas M. Disch (1994)
“At times, this falling, staccato movement slides from the mesmerizing to the numbing; it's as if Clover's been charmed by his own music and has stopped scrutinizing language, stopped investigating it on the phonemic and syntactic levels”	John Yau (1997/98) [mixed review]
<i>Stuffiness (2 reviews)</i>	
“Only intermittently, however, does she display Rilke's priggish stuffiness”	David Wojahn (1995) [mixed review]
“Reading a five-poem sequence called “The Interpretation of Dream,” based on <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> and, of course, on Freud, I kept wishing someone would open the windows and let some fresh air in”	Richard Tillinghast (1995) [mixed review]
<i>Insularity (2 reviews)</i>	
“An apostrophe “To Lautremont” begins, ominously, “I don't know what to say to you” and maunders a little while in a vaguely lyrical way”	Thomas M. Disch (1994) [mixed review]
“Greger gives the impression of being perhaps too much at home in an interior world; references that may leave the reader scratching his head and wondering, seem to her no cause for alarm”	Richard Tillinghast (1995) [mixed review]
<i>Cheap humor (1 review)</i>	
“Sometimes, though, Hudgins seeks something less elevated than irony; and in many cases his humor devolves into cheap shots, easy ridicule, and a kind of adolescent guffawing”	David Wojahn (1995) [mixed review]
<i>Self-indulgence (1 review)</i>	
“The trouble with the new collection is that the self-indulgent aspect [...] too often threatens to overwhelm any invulnerability”	David Wojahn (1995) [mixed review]

Table 7. Examples: Reasons for dismissing particular poetry

The examples split into two groups: the first group contains hedging ('may leave', 'have tended to be') and more milder forms of relational and experiential values, the second group lacks hedging and expresses stronger relational and expressive values. An example of the first group is the quote by Richard Tillinghast (1995) where he stresses in the relational assumption about the reader that he/she *may* not understand all the references by Debora Greger, but does not preclude such understanding, perhaps in order not to undervalue the reader's insightfulness. Tillinghast also employs the metaphor of being safely inside home walls in implying that Greger uses language that is too dense to crack, but is careful to hedge this with the construction 'gives the impression'. An example of the second group is the quote by David Wojahn (1995) where the author employs strong relational and expressive values to state something about the poet under review. Phrases like 'seeks something less elevated than irony' and 'his humor devolves' assume a commonality of values with the reader.

As the table shows, the biggest proportion of complaints by the reviewers concern form for form's sake and limited range (5 texts each), also excessiveness or inadequate command of language or theme (4 texts each). Stuffiness and insularity were both mentioned in 2 texts; cheap humor and self-indulgence in 1 text each. As stated above, the majority of reviews contained both praise and criticism – in varying degrees – and only two reviews were completely negative with no direct praise whatsoever. Much of this could down to the style of the reviewers: David Wojahn (1995) found something negative to say in all of his 7 reviews in the *Poetry Magazine* while David Baker (1994) said nothing negative in any of his 5 reviews for the same magazine.

Interestingly, while reasons for valuing poetry included intertextuality and mastery of language or form, reasons for dismissing poetry include 'empty trickery' (form for form's sake), limited range or excessiveness (such as the length of the poem) – again a question of form. And while positive reviews pointed at humor, discussion of certain issues or originality, negative comments did not really touch on the content of the poetry under question. Most criticism tends to focus on form, though there were charges of stuffiness and cheap humor that have mostly to do with content.

3.4.2. Relational and expressive values

Although the analysis focused mostly on experiential values, there were some telling uses of relational and expressive values. The discussion of many such examples is embedded in the rest of the text, but this section here will also highlight a few instances to show the style of the reviews in more detail.

According to Fairclough, relational value signifies the author's intent to express “commonality of values,” (Fairclough 1996: 117) as if the author assumed that the reader agrees with him/her. Such invocations are expressed through phrases like *We all prefer* or *Nobody in their right mind would*. In an opinion piece such as poetry criticism, the authors might use such phrases more frequently than in a nominally more formal text such as a news article. The following table highlights three examples of such kind.

Relational expressions of 'common values'	
“[T]he strength of the collection as a whole is enough to make us reconsider the eras in which Jacobsen wrote”	Joe Oesterhaus (1995/96)
“Sometimes we feel the willful strain of a speaker bending all matter to her accusing tale”	David Gewanter (1995/96)
“John Ashbery's poems have become an integral part of the lives of those who read poetry”	Forrest Gander (1999)

Table 8. Examples: Relational expressions of 'common values'

Sometimes such relational expressions assume the reader experiences the same effect as the author – David Gewanter believes his readers would also “feel the willful strain” of Deborah Digges's poetry (Gewanter 1995/96). At other times, the author suggests that anyone sharing the vantage point of the critic would agree to his/her conclusion such as when Joe Oesterhaus realizes that Josephine Jacobsen's poetry requires a retroactive reassessment of the American poetry anthologies (Oesterhaus 1995/96). And sometimes a critic such as Forrest Gander (1999) quite forcefully assumes that those “who read poetry” also consider a certain poet to be integral, leaving no space for those who might disagree.

Expressive values in Fairclough's terminology concern the choice of vocabulary and often hint at an ideological clash (Fairclough 1996: 118-119). Poetry criticism by its very definition provokes the author to choose words in order to express his/her opinion about the poet and his/her poetry, and quite often also the general situation in poetry. The reviewed texts of critique are therefore usually laden with such choices of vocabulary to express the author's opinion. Three examples below show the strategies authors use in case of expressive valuation.

Expressive values in the choice of vocabulary	
“To read this subject-matter in careful, subtle iambs rings a sea-change in the usual associations with the meter”	Ellen Davis (1995)
“Ashbery establishes a prosodic coherence only to abandon it”	Forrest Gander (1999)
“When Peter Dale Scott's remarkable and unnerving long poem, <i>Coming to Japan</i> appeared in 1988, it was recognized as a major work”	Joshua Weiner (1995)

Table 9. Examples: Expressive values in the choice of vocabulary

For example, Ellen Davis believes that anyone reading Carl Phillips's poetry will notice his innovation (Davis 1995). Forrest Gander finds that John Ashbery, notorious for his 'difficult' style, is perfectly capable of writing coherent poetry and simply chooses to meddle with prosody for poetic effect (Gander 1999). Joshua Weiner suggests that Peter Dale Scott has already been recognized as a major poet, and for a good reason (Weiner 1995). Such expressive wordings may reflect ideological clashes as when Gander (1999) states that Ashbery 'abandons' prosodic coherence – this metaphor does not seem to imply a positive approach to such a shift.

3.4.4. Metaphors

This section will not look at each and every metaphor employed by the authors, displaying only some examples of metaphors as parts of a set. There were no overarching categories or sets that could be found in every text or that would allow for generalization,

but the sets could be categorized into three groups. Some authors used a whole plethora of related metaphors to express their reading of specific poetry while others employed them more sparsely. Many authors preferred to take their cue from the reviewed collection's title or themes, yet another group chose their own set of metaphors that might not be related to the poetry under review.

Usage of metaphors
<p>Metaphors based on the title</p> <p>"The "clarity of detail" visible from the blithe high places is forgotten in a fall" "She poises her words upon sharp antitheses, improvising the moments of her freedom upon the brink of ruinous form" "The spirit of matter meets the weight of matter on a poem's line, [it] is a fiery force that tips the balance and sends poetry over the line, out of syntactic captivation"</p> <p>Donald Revell (1996) about Karen Volkman's <i>Crash's Law</i></p> <p>"This is a spooky, unsettling book, muted like a trumpet can be muted, haunted by women who have not told, who will not tell, cannot tell – but who speak anyway: hoping we'll get it by what they do not say, or by the look in their eyes we cannot see" "The book itself is an enactment of the process of coming into speech: a living history of voices that write but cannot live, or live but do not say" "In this mute encounter something happens in the woman – she's restored to her own body, back in her bed, under her own sheets and she lets herself have "what I didn't have words for" – and in that auto-erotic act the poem celebrates an active speechlessness and resolves"</p> <p>Marie Howe (1995) about Patricia Traxler's <i>Forbidden Words</i></p> <p>"Digges' smoothly ordered lyrics are set among more spiky and scraping songs, ones that name "the stand-ins, lovers, the lies like animal shadows" and that teach us "faith's limits" "Those earlier volumes mixed family tales, domestic loves, and scientific myths into a rich sensible music; <i>Rough Music</i>, to borrow a phrase from Ornette Coleman, has "run a saw or something through it, then come back with the melody" "The advance in design may have come at a cost; some voices don't catch the tonal complexity of swallowed pain, cool observation, ironic wisdom and naked ardor of Digges' own monodies"</p> <p>David Gewanter (1995/96) about Deborah Digges's <i>Rough Music</i></p>
<p>Metaphors based on the themes</p> <p>"[T]he three prose narratives [...] are a sort of spell laid upon the ground the poet will cover so fluently" "Merwin has always ransacked world literature for the means to his realizations, never more fruitfully than in the undeviating splendor of this landlocked sequence" "[T]here has been what Emerson has called a long foreground within Merwin's own oeuvre"</p> <p>Richard Howard (1996) about W. S. Merwin's <i>The Vixen</i></p> <p>"With childlike insouciance, Ashbery personifies this world" "His surrealism [...] and his inscrutable zaniness [...] also seem innocently childlike, at moments as radiantly joyous as lines by the mystical poet Thomas Traherne" "Just as in our lives, where we aren't conclusive, where we change our minds and tell our kids one thing and then take it back as they argue and we speed along trying to make out the street signs to wherever it is we are driving them, in Ashbery's poems our focus never quite settles, but careens along, taking in this and that, the relevant and the extraneous, juggling it all at once"</p> <p>Forrest Gander (1999) about John Ashbery's <i>Girls on the Run</i></p> <p>"As befits a seacoast-dweller, Philip Booth has a keen nose and sharp eye for the minutest permutations of weather" "The observer of the stars here will be a sailor with someplace to reach or return to" "[I]n "Navigation" from Philip Booth's new collection, <i>Pairs</i>, the stars appear in a more familiar, less metaphorical guise"</p> <p>Richard Tillinghast (1995) about Philip Booth's <i>Pairs</i></p>
<p>Metaphors not based on the reviewed poetry</p> <p>"But half a loaf of Hollander is still a surfeit of riches" "In a poetry culture in which the McPoem so much preponderates that many middle-aged poetry bureaucrats have never tasted anything else, the poetry of John Hollander is dinner at Lutèce" "[Hollander's poetry] may not necessarily be more nourishing; sometimes, indeed, the sauces can be so rich as to seem sinful, especially to those who regard tofu and brown rice as the poetically correct alternative to hamburgers"</p> <p>Thomas M. Disch (1994) about John Hollander's <i>Selected Poetry and Tesserae and Other Poems</i></p> <p>"I find it hard to distinguish "songs" from "poems", since Elmslie has achieved the Campionesque feat of writing songs which are also exactly poems on the page" "Something you hear and see but finally you hear more than see, because that's what poetry's like, it occurs between words where their sounds meet" "As for the song-like metric, I can hear it throughout the book"</p> <p>Alice Notley (1999) about Kenward Elmslie's <i>Routine Disruptions</i></p> <p>"[T]he empty heart of non-identity functions as a generative principle, each giving birth in its own way to a new universe of signifying practice" "Like star-systems in dispersal, Gizzi's texts often intersect with, and pass through, the works of others" "Gizzi's texts are often crystallizations of a complex intertextuality, passing, like wheeling star-systems, through the systems of many</p>

Table 10. Examples: Usage of Metaphors

The first group of authors employ metaphors directly lifted from the title of the reviewed collection – Donald Revell's review (1996) of *Crash's Law* by Karen Volkman is shot through with metaphors about balance, rising and falling, tumbling, precipices etc. Other authors exploit themes in the collections such as when Richard Howard (1996) refers to Merwin's penchant for travel poems and visions of landscape through respective metaphors. In contrast, the third group focuses on a set of metaphors that might not have anything to do with the particular collection, but somehow seem appropriate to the reviewer – Thomas M. Disch (1994) exploits the metaphor of poetry as food, despite the fact that John Hollander's collection does not include food prominently neither in their titles nor in the major themes. However, the 'rich' language of Hollander prompts Disch to compare his works to exquisite dishes. Yet the idiosyncratic nature of the texts did not yield any overarching generalizations about the metaphors used. No groups of metaphors emerged as notable patterns, remaining instead disparate, isolated examples based mostly on the reviewed poetry.

3.5. Interpretation and explanation

The interpretation and explanation of the analysis employs interpretation procedures – members' resources (see article 2.2.2 of the previous chapter) – and six domains: situational context, intertextual context, surface of utterance, meaning of utterance, local coherence, and global coherence (see article 2.2.5.2 of the previous chapter). In this thesis, situational context is the American poetry culture. Due to various reasons, poetry is read in the U.S. mainly by a small circle of people, many of whom are poets themselves, and passions can run high in such a closely knit community. The small scale is also why critics have quite a say in influencing trends. As John Yau (1997/98) says, many American poets direct their work at a small, more empathetic and sensitive audience than the audience at large. In such a closely knit community, passions can run high – see, for example, the furious clashes in *Jacket 2* issue no. 2 between Bob Perelman and his opponents (including such notable poets as Ron Silliman and Juliana Spahr) over the state and scope of poetry – and critics have quite a say in influencing trends. Also, intertextuality is widespread and perhaps even required in such a community as many authors frequently enter into dialogue with their (anonymous) opponents over what is and is not 'good' poetry and often refer to

names or works in the past to lend credence to their observations or comparisons. Quite often this intertextuality means references to the poets from the beginning of the 20th century, creating a sort of bridge between the beginning and end of the century.

The status of the critics expresses itself through the schemata used by the authors in their texts: these are the categories most often present in the positive and negative reviews, hinting perhaps at some 'templates' of articles expected in poetry criticism discourse. Such schemata are often markers of struggle – as Fairclough notes, struggle does not have to mean open warfare (Fairclough 1996: 164). The discourse determinants on the situational level, the level of U.S. poetry culture, may arise from factors unseen to the analyst (personal relations, past reviews, social status), but they may also come from implicit norms. Categories such as 'Erudition (of the poet)' or 'Discussion of gender issues' hint at what the critics expect from 'good' poetry in the 1990s. It would seem that a commendable poet is well-versed in the history of poetry and well-read in the general sense of the term. It is also expected from the poet to treat gender issues – such as LGBT themes or traditional gender roles –, perhaps due to the intense discussion surrounding these themes in the 1990s society at large.

4 CONCLUSION

This thesis looked at implicit norm creation on part of poetry critics in the texts written in the 1990s about contemporary American poetry, i.e. the U.S. poetry of the 90s. In the chapter of introduction and theory, I outlined three main approaches to canon and implicit norm creation, labeling them – strictly within the context of this thesis – the *traditionalist*, the *deconstructionist*, and the *syncretist* way. Quotes by Harold Bloom, Stanley Fish, E. Dean Kolbas and other authors illuminated my reasoning behind my chosen labels and provided an overview of the diverse understanding of implicit norms.

Implicit norms are important because, in spite of the views critics hold about canonicity, there are criteria they use to write poetry criticism. I was therefore interested in analyzing a corpus of texts to see if any detectable patterns would emerge in connection with such implicit norms.

The second chapter, the chapter of methodology and data, described in greater detail the adapted version of Norman Fairclough's Critical Language Study (CLS) and the sample of 47 texts I chose from American poetry magazines of the 1990s as my corpus. Use of a tool not commonly applied in literary studies was deliberate in order to see whether such an interdisciplinary effort would yield telling results. The findings of this analysis were reported in the third chapter that described in detail the analysis process and the results most relevant to implicit norms and their creation. As instructed by Fairclough, I then interpreted and explained the descriptions in order to gain a cohesive picture of the findings.

This corpus of poetry reviews, chosen from three different sources and written by different authors – many themselves poets –, was different enough to rule out sweeping generalizations. However, certain themes and issues do stand out after the analysis.

A discursive reading of the 47 reviews written by 26 authors showed that, while critics had very few agreements on what exactly is the essence of poetry or whether their contemporary poetry culture valued the 'right' kind of poetry, some categories emerged as the best indicators of 'good' poetry. Out of all the 47 reviews, 26 emphasized intertextuality, 25 noted favorable comparisons with predecessors or peers, and 21 texts praised the poet's mastery of language and/or poetic forms. In addition to lauding a poet's acquired status or proven career (18 texts), reviewers also appreciated his/her use of humor

(16 texts), irony or parody (15 texts), fragmented style (14 texts) or observation skills (14 texts). Also notable was the use of disembodied voice(s) (13 texts), pastiche (13 texts), and attention paid to gender issues (11 texts). Of less importance, but still of note, were the poet's erudition (8 texts) and originality (5 texts).

When it comes to 'bad' poetry, conclusions are less certain because most of the 47 reviews had a positive tone. However, 11 reviews could be considered mixed (containing both positive and negative feedback) and only 2 were uniformly negative. The main reasons for dismissing were form for form's sake or 'empty trickery' (mentioned in 5 texts) and limited range (5 texts). Other conspicuous reasons included excessiveness, such as the exorbitant length of the poems/collections (4 texts), or inadequate command of language or the chosen theme (4 texts). Stuffiness and insularity of the poetry were both mentioned twice, cheap humor and self-indulgence once.

It would appear that both praise and criticism of poetry in the corpus focused mainly on form – intertextuality and mastery of form on the positive side and 'empty trickery' and limited range on the negative side. The content side of poetry, such as humor or specific issues, offered less popular categories.

As opinion pieces, poetry reviews in the sample included many instances of relational values where the author expects the reader to share his/her values and, similarly, many instances of expressive values where the author expresses his/her opinion without any qualms. Some of the examples highlighted the tendency of the reviewers to employ the pronoun 'we' or presuppositions concerning preferences in poetry.

When it came to metaphors, some reviews exploited them to great extent. Authors such as Donald Revell (1996) or Andrew Joron (1999) even based much of their text on a set of interlocking or related metaphors – in Revell's case taking cue from the reviewed collection's title and in Joron's case sharing the theme with the poet under review. Metaphor usage fell into three groups: 1) employing metaphor(s) on the basis of the title of the reviewed collection; 2) employing metaphor(s) on the basis of the theme(s) in the reviewed collection; 3) employing metaphor(s) independently of the texts under review. However, no group of metaphors formed a pattern that would yield generalizations.

An interesting finding is the way many critics – see, for example, Baker (1994), Lennon (1997/98), Yau (1997/98) – position both themselves and the curiously underrated poet outside the Establishment/mainstream poetry culture, revealing struggles on the

situational and societal level. In their view, the poetry under review is not like the prevailing trend that attacks the plain style (Baker 1994), practices “debased realism” (Yau 1997/98) or fails to value the challenge of dense poetry (Lennon 1997/98). Sometimes the anonymous Establishment has done too little to notice a deserving poet like Josephine Jacobsen (Oesterhaus 1995/96) or David Ignatow (Wojahn 1995). At other times it has failed to properly read their style (Ramke 1996; Perloff 1998). In many cases, the poetry review places itself in confrontation with an ideological opponent on the societal or situational level and often suggests that the attention paid to such poetry has been insufficient.

In terms of implicit requirements on 'good' poetry, a notable combination might arise from the categories of 'mastery of language and/or poetic forms' and 'erudition' – these could indicate the high level of skill critics expect even from newcomers. Combined with the demanding style of poetry review, such members' resources might hint at a 'high threshold' for anyone wishing to participate in American poetry discourse.

An instructive aspect has been the absence of the word 'canon' from the corpus. It seems that critics go to great lengths to avoid using such a loaded term, yet they still employ strategies to propose the inclusion of their favored poet on the list of selected greats. The overarching term for such attempts in my analysis was 'venerability/status'. For example, authors emphasized the long-term high quality of a poet's work (e.g. Clark 1999; Lennon 1997/98), constant development (e.g. Oesterhaus 1995/96; Tillinghast 1995) or unique nature in American poetry culture (e.g. Davis 1995/96; Wojahn 1995). In speaking about the enduring value of a poet's work or calling for a recognition of somebody as a true American poet (Wojahn 1995), the critics were promoting the inclusion of such work on the list of selected greats, even if they diligently avoided any mention of canonicity.

Finally, while the analysis did not yield any overarching and definitive patterns, many of the findings do pose questions for the future. The relative lack of negative criticism could be explained away with the sample, but the most popular categories for positive criticism cropped up far too often to be dismissed. Intertextuality, comparison with other poets, pastiche, and fragmented style might hint at implicit norms concerning postmodernist poetry; mastery of language/poetic forms and erudition might present implicit requirements on American poets. The latter, along with the demanding style of poetry reviews, could also indicate the 'high threshold' required from anyone who wishes

to participate in American poetry discourse. This would do little to expand the popularity of poetry in the U.S. and – in the words of one critic – would ensure that the poets will remain safe from burgeoning readership due to the great demands placed on the reader, whether the critics consider such poetry worthy of attention or not.

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RESÜMEE

TARTU ÜLIKOOL

INGLISE FILOLOOGIA OSAKOND

Mario Pulver

Implicit Norm Creation in the U.S. Poetry Criticism in the 1990s

Implitsiitsete normide loomine USA luulekriitikas 1990-ndatel aastatel

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Annotatsioon:

Käesoleva töö eesmärgiks on uurida implitsiitsete normide loomist USA luulekriitikas 1990-ndatel aastatel. Töö koosneb neljast peatükist.

Sissejuhatuse ja teooria peatükis räägitakse kolmest peamisest kaanon ja normide käsitlusest, mida töö kontekstis nimetatakse *traditsiooniliseks*, *dekonstruktsionistlikuks* ja *sünkretistlikuks* lähenemiseks niivõrd vaieldavale mõistele kui “kaanon”. Samuti selgitatakse implitsiitsete normide ehk kriitiku poolt artikli käigus avalduvate normatiivsete kriteeriumide mõistet.

Metodoloogia ja andmete peatükis kirjeldatakse autori poolt töö tarbeks kohandatud Norman Fairclough meetodi *Critical Language Study* versiooni ja selle rakendamist 47 tekstist koosnevale korpusele, mis moodustati kolme USA luuleajakirja materjalide alusel. Diskursusanalüüsi ebatavaline rakendamine luulekriitika uurimiseks oli teadlik katse kontrollida, kas interdistsiplinaarse lähenemisega on võimalik saada tulemusi.

Tulemuste peatükis selgitatakse detailselt analüüsiprotsessi ja võetakse kokku peamised tulemused, mis seonduvad implitsiitsete normidega. Analüüsi käigus tuvastati, et valimis kasutatakse positiivsete kategooriatena ennekõike intertekstuaalsust, võrdlust teiste luuletajatega, keele- ja luulevormide meisterlikku valdamist ning luuletaja staatust või senist karjääri. Negatiivsete kategooriatena mainiti peamiselt sisutühja vormimängu, poeedi piiratust, luule liigset pikkust või keele/teema ebapiisavat valdamist. Nii positiivne kui negatiivne kriitika keskendus sisu asemel ennekõike vormile.

Lisaks tuvastati analüüsis, et kriitikud positsioneerisid sageli nii ennast kui kiidetud luuletajat väljapoole “peavoolu”. Teiseks tähelepanekuks oli vaidlusaluse mõiste “kaanon” vältimine kriitikas, ehkki arvustajad rõhutasid luuletaja püsivat väärtust, pikaajalist kõrget taset või ainulaadset staatust ameerika kultuuris, mida võib pidada just nimelt väljavalituse tunnustamiseks.

Tulevaste uuringute tarbeks jäi silma, et kuigi valimist ei koorunud välja läbivaid jooni, kordusid mõned temaatilised kategooriad piisavalt sageli: intertekstuaalsus, võrdlus teiste luuletajatega, pastišš ja katkendlik stiil võiks viidata postmodernistliku lähenemise eelistamisele 90-ndate luules. Luuletaja eruditsiooni rõhutamine ja arvustuste keerukas keelekasutus võivad aga seada eeltingimusi ameerika luulediskursuses osalemisele, nõudes nii lugejalt kui luuletajalt kõrget kvalifikatsiooni ja hoides USA luulet suhteliselt marginaalsel kohal ühiskonnas.

Märksõnad: ameerika luule, diskursuseanalüüs, stilistika, normatiivsus

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