

*Castle Rock Writers Conference*



**POETRY**

*and the*

**TRANSFORMATIONAL**

**Wave**

# Structure and Form

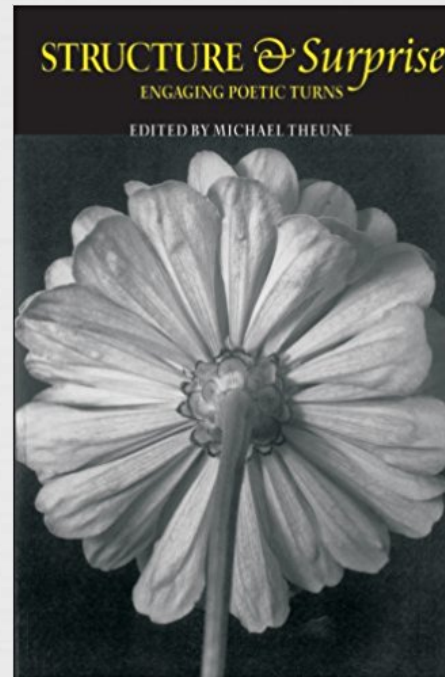


**Michael Theune, “Poetic Structure and Poetic Form”**

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**Michael Theune, “Poetic Structure and Poetic Form”**

**Randall Jarrell:** “A successful poem starts from one position and ends at a very different one, often a contradictory or opposite one, yet there has been no break in the unity of the poem.”

**T. S. Eliot:** The surprising turn is “one of the most important means of poetic effect since Homer.”

# Starting with the “turn”



A “turn” in poetry is  
any significant change in the intellectual and/or emotional  
trajectory of the poem’s development.

# The Transformational Wave



A structure created by the sequence of turns that make up a good poem. The transformational wave expresses an emotional/intellectual process of *transformation*.

*The point of creating such waves is to stimulate similar transformations in the reader.*

# A Structure of Turns



Because it is a structure of turns, the transformational wave emerges from the poet's imagination in unexpected ways and, in turn (!), surprises the reader.

This is why poems that simply fulfill our expectations are clichéd, feeble, empty-feeling. And this is why Robert Frost famously said:

**“No surprise in the writer, no surprise in the reader.”**

Said otherwise: *No transformational wave, no poem.*

# The Question of Meaning



As with any piece of writing, readers bring their own life experience to a poem and use it to create, in themselves, *their version* of the transformational wave.

Meaning is a *co-creation* by the poet and the reader.



# A haiku by Kobayashi Issa



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**A horse farts:**

# A haiku by Kobayashi Issa



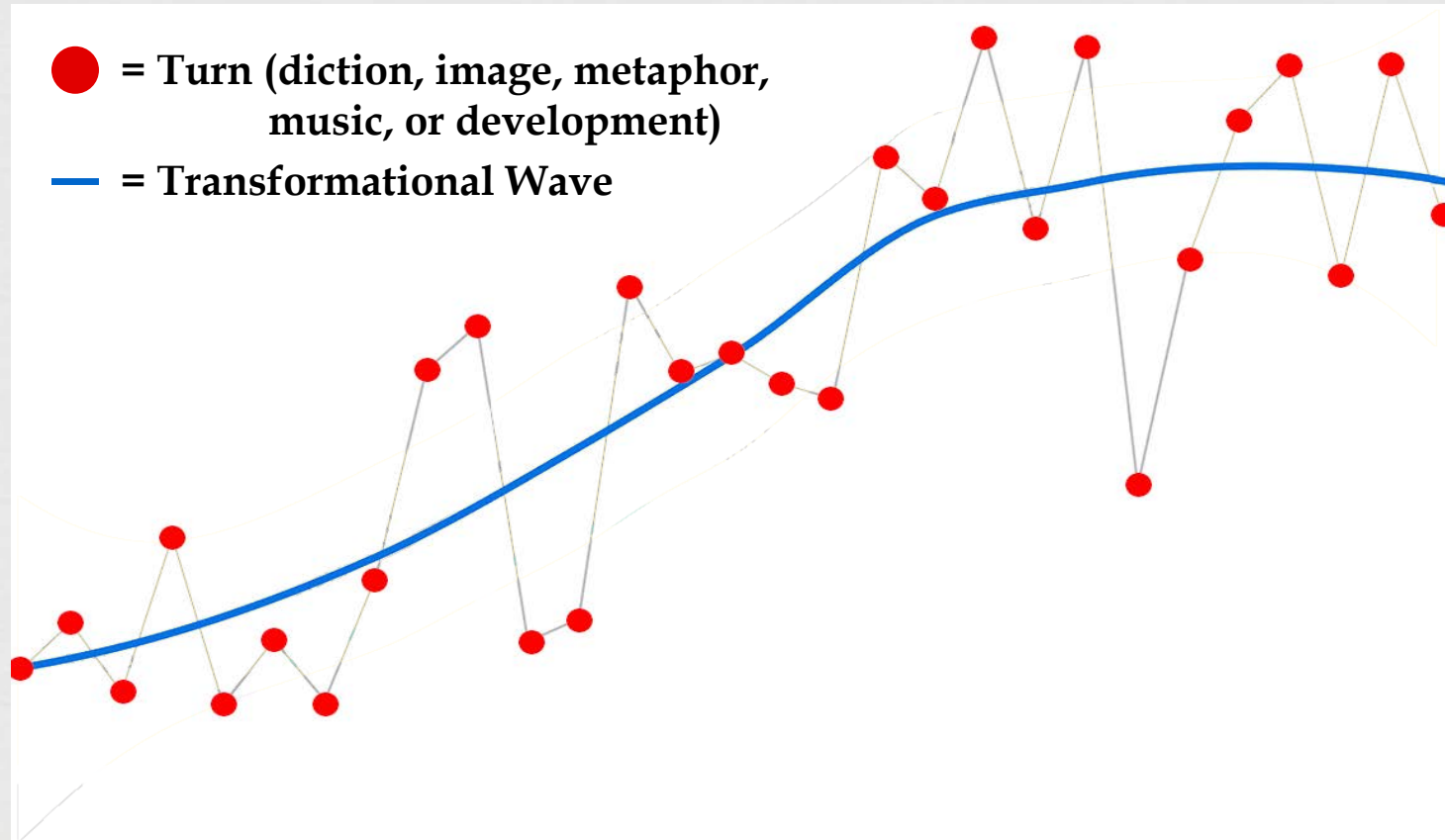
**A horse farts:  
four or five suffer**

# A haiku by Kobayashi Issa



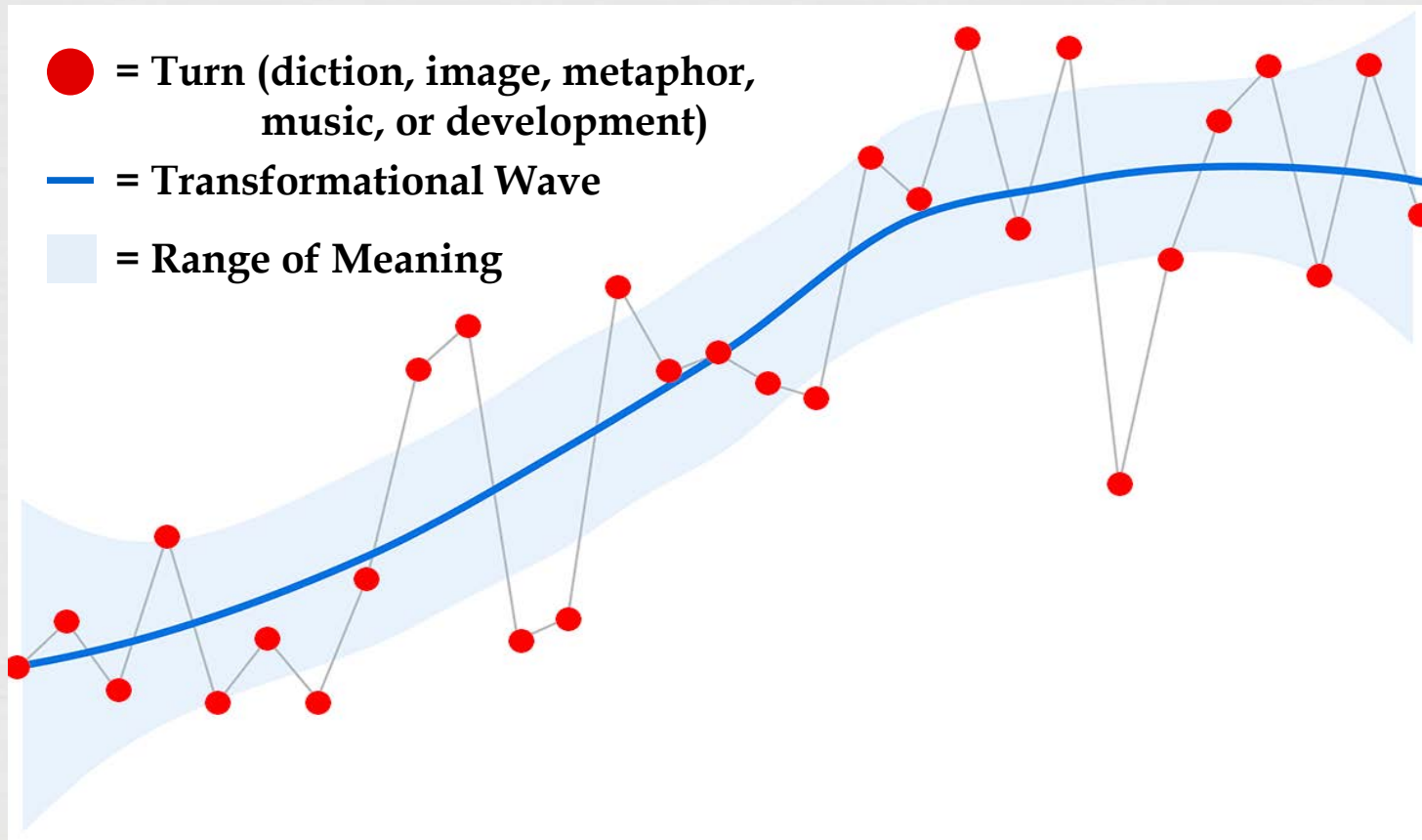
**A horse farts:  
four or five suffer  
on the ferryboat.**

# Wave Close-up





# Co-Creation = Range of Meaning



# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



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Whose woods these are I think I know.

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



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Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.



# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



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Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.  
He will not see me stopping here

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.  
  
My little horse must think it queer

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



Whose woods these are I think I know.  
His house is in the village though.  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.

My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



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He gives his harness bells a shake

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



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He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.



# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.

The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,

# Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening

— Robert Frost



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The only other sound's the sweep  
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The woods are lovely, dark and deep,  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.

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# *Joe's Info*



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