

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Poet John Haines is best known for his first book of poetry, *Winter News*, which was published in 1966. The book contains poems about the Alaskan landscape that surrounded Haines during his many years of living in Richardson, Alaska. The recurring motifs in his poems include hunting, trapping, the Arctic cold, animals, and death. Haines says *Winter News* "was born of the isolation in which I then lived" (preface *OMD*). It is an isolation that Haines portrays well to his audience and one that has earned him critical praise.

Many critics have focused on Haines's use of metaphor and imagery throughout his poetry in *Winter News* and subsequent books, yet one area that has not been addressed in detail is Haines's use of sound devices, a vital poetic element. Scholar Helen Vendler says that poets are aware of *all* the sounds in their poems, as well as the various

rhythms. Vendler notes that "poets 'bind' words together in a line by having them share sounds, whether consonants or vowels. This makes the words sound as if they 'belong' together by natural affinity" (145).

Haines produces sounds and rhythms using a variety of devices such as assonance, consonance, and alliteration. This paper closely examines a variety of his poems in *Winter News* and subsequent books, and it illustrates his extensive sound device usage. Chapter one introduces Haines and establishes the boundaries of this paper. Chapter two discusses the importance sound has in poetry; the chapter details Goold Brown's classification of letters, which is used as the basis for the sound dissection. Selected poems from *Winter News* and later books are discussed in detail. Chapter three analyzes the death motif, particularly prevalent in "The Moosehead," "On the Divide," and "Arlington." Haines's sound device usage, in connection with these poems, also is examined in chapter three. The final chapter discusses the conclusions that culminate from the previous chapters.

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Sound and Death in John Haines's Poetry

by

Darren L. Noble

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APPROVED:

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Major Professor, representing English

Redacted for Privacy

Chair of Department of English

Redacted for Privacy

Dean of Graduate School

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Darren L. Noble, Author

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List of Abbreviations

The following abbreviations are used throughout this paper to refer to selected books by John Haines:

<i>CIC</i>	<i>Cicada</i>
<i>FAD</i>	<i>Fables and Distances: New and Selected Essays</i>
<i>LOC</i>	<i>Living Off the Country: Essays on Poetry and Place</i>
<i>NFG</i>	<i>News from the Glacier</i>
<i>NP</i>	<i>New Poems: 1980-88</i>
<i>NUP</i>	<i>New and Uncollected Poems (1993)</i>
<i>OMD</i>	<i>The Owl in the Mask of the Dreamer</i>
<i>SH</i>	<i>The Stone Harp</i>
<i>WN</i>	<i>Winter News</i>

Sound and Death in John Haines's Poetry

I. The Sound in the Wilderness

Then, before my first year in art school was over, came my decision to leave school, to seek adventure and a home in Alaska. From that decision and its consequences I date my beginning as a poet.

--John Haines (*Fables and Distances* 4-5)

In his book *Wilderness and the American Mind* author Roderick Nash writes: "Any place in which a person feels stripped of guidance, lost, and perplexed may be called a wilderness" (3). In 1947 John Haines personally illustrated Nash's point. Haines had just finished attending the National Art School in Washington, D.C., when he decided to leave for Alaska to homestead in the vicinity of Fairbanks, at a small place called Richardson. He arrived there to seek adventure, though a different sort than he had experienced during his three years in the Navy. Haines was raised in a military family; his father had been a Naval officer, and Haines followed him into the Navy in 1943 and saw action as a radio and radar operator in the South Pacific during World War II. Alaska's wilderness sharply contrasted with what Haines had been accustomed to--U.S. naval ports, big cities, and life in the South Pacific. Richardson was vastly different from all these places. From 1905 until the First World War, Richardson had been a

thriving gold rush camp. When Haines arrived in 1947 there were only about eight residents who lived near his homestead. On a hillside in the Richardson area, which included Banner Creek and the nearby Tenderfoot region, Haines built himself a small home and settled in for the winter (LOC 8-9). He decided to paint the spectacular outdoor scenery around him, so he made an easel and then tried some sketching and watercolor painting. Ironically his efforts to reproduce something substantial were short-lived due to his inability to deal with the very subjects he was trying to capture on to his canvas. Haines recounts this difficult period:

The outdoor scene with its snowmass and its slanting and fugitive winter light, its mountains, and its icebound river, struck me as so overwhelming and dominant in itself that my halting efforts to reproduce some of it on paper or canvas seemed to me more and more futile. After a few weeks I grew despondent and cast about for something else to do. (FAD 5)

So Haines began to write. Time spent during the first winter at his homestead proved invaluable to his writing, especially because his subjects were once again directly outside his front door. This particular season had a profound effect on him, and he needed a way to respond to "its newness and mystery, its strange power" (FAD 5). Haines explored the wilderness around him, met some of the individuals who inhabited the region, and once he started

writing poetry all of his feelings about the area and his new life spilled on to paper. Haines recalls writing steadily for weeks; his poetry was "long-lined and prosy, made up from God knows what model, but it certainly wasn't Chaucer" (*FAD* 5).

After the second summer at his homestead, Haines decided to return to school; he left Richardson and returned to Washington, D.C., where he enrolled in the art program at American University. Before he left Alaska, though, he sent his former girlfriend some of the poems he had written. Her mother read them in turn, and when Haines arrived from Alaska she suggested he meet with and show his poems to the poetry consultant at the Library of Congress, Leonie Adams (*FAD* 7-8). This meeting would turn out to be a pivotal point in Haines's life. Haines passionately recalls his September 1948 meeting with Adams:

She asked who I was reading. I don't remember what I replied to her, but it was bound to be obvious that I knew next to nothing of modern poetry. She asked me if I had read this or that poet, and named a few of them, famous at the time: Eliot, Ransom, Cummings, Frost, and others. She then did something for which I will always be grateful. She put a recording on a machine that stood against the wall in her office, and played for us brief moments of these poets reading from their own work. We listened to Frost, to Ransom, and to several others whose names have slipped away. These voices, unknown to me, and unlike anything I had read before, stirred a new interest in me . . . in no time at all I launched myself into modern poetry with an appetite born of long deprivation. (*FAD* 7-8)

Haines's anecdote illustrates the effect that poetry can command when one hears it read aloud, but this anecdote is not the only one in which Haines recounts how sound has influenced him. One day, while browsing in a bookstore in Washington, D.C., Haines saw a crowd gathering in the corner of a room listening to the recorded voice of T.S. Eliot reading from *The Waste Land*: "My ear was caught by that music and the tone of that voice, as obscure as I found the verses then, and I was soon deep into the work of that poet, echoing his imagery and his cadences" (FAD 8). This type of experience affected Haines so much that he later mentions writing poems "with the cadences of one poet or another running in [his] head" (FAD 9).

As Haines began to seriously study poetry, which included many of his own poetry compositions, certain poets impressed him more than others. In 1950, while in New York City attending Hans Hofmann School of Fine Arts, Haines absorbed the city life and poetry scene. Haines consumed Hart Crane's poetry with what he called a "religious passion," and he also read Walt Whitman and Dylan Thomas. It was Thomas and his "sonorous voice" that so enthralled Haines and inspired him to begin writing in a new style, one that Haines labeled "not yet my own" (FAD 13). Poetry,

which till now had not been his sole focus, became Haines's primary passion as he details in an interview with Kevin Walzer:

I decided then to concentrate my life on writing, on poetry . . . poetry was the overriding thing. Once I made that decision, I poured all my energy into it. (16)

Other influential poets include W.B. Yeats and Wallace Stevens; however, Haines's own style was further enhanced by an eclectic group of writers. Critic Dana Gioia argues that Haines's study was both similar to his contemporaries, yet different: "Like most young poets of his generation, Haines was initially influenced by Pound, Eliot, and Williams, but gradually his search for masters went outside American literature" (Gioia xvii).

Even though Haines's writing during his early years resembled to an extent that of his contemporaries Robert Bly and James Wright, his list of influences was very different from other generational poets. The poets Tu Fu, Li Po, Antonio Machado, and Georg Trakl are among those who influenced Haines (Gioia xvii). One particular writer, though not a poet, was Sigrid Undset. Her trilogy *Kristin Lavransdatter* echoed the world Haines was just scratching the surface of during his early years as a poet:

And there on the page was the North I was coming to know. The book and the sound of the river below the house mingled, and my being there had that much more meaning for me. This is what real literature does, it seems to me. (LOC 14-15)

Of interest here, besides Haines's kinship to another northern writer, is Haines's reference to "the sound of the river." Sound implementation was an integral component during his formation as a poet and something he consciously paid attention to while practicing his craft. Haines listened; sound was not just something heard and then forgotten, and it was not solely an element experimented with, as writers are apt to do; rather, for Haines, sound and meaning "mingled." The end result was a better understanding of his own presence in his new surroundings. Importantly, sound would become for Haines a major tool in his own writing, especially in his first book, *Winter News*.

Haines returned to his Alaskan homestead in 1954 and permanently settled down. His decision to make his living hunting and trapping, as well as working as a carpenter and laborer at Richardson, was instrumental in shaping his career as a writer. These jobs provided the substance of his poetry. With his new focus, Haines churned out poetry about a myriad of subjects, many of which, as was the case with his painting, were just outside his doorstep: moose, nearby rivers and hills, death, cold Alaskan nights, and of course, snow.

Since Haines was now a devoted full-time writer, these subjects, along with what he was daily seeing and experiencing, were now being depicted as words rather than

painted images and this required a certain writing process--one that mimicked his painting process to an extent.

Poetry, as Haines explains, is similar to painting insofar as being a composition figure:

I do tend to see a poem as an object, as an actual figure defined in space and time. I like to feel that the thing has some graspability and solidity: I like clean outlines, clarity of form. I like to see a poem, as well as to hear it. (Hedin 109)

Even though composing poetry is important to Haines he doesn't offer any particular principle of poetic composition; rather, he explains that "the substance of a poem, the *idea*, always suggests a certain *form*, visual and aural, a certain figure in time and space" ("At White River" 122). This *aural* form in Haines's poetic compositions manifests itself often in subtleties:

Certain accidents of diction (not really accidents, perhaps, but things unconsciously provided for) always occur in a poem: repetitions of sounds, rhymes and near rhymes. For example: "fire" and "wire"; "snow" and "below"; "there," "car"; "iron," "nine," "down"; "land," "blind," "wind." I let these things happen, mostly by attention to the sound of it, without letting the rhyme become too obvious. ("At White River" 123)

To illustrate Haines's philosophy in practice, here is the final stanza of his poem "The Presence," from *Interim*:

A glowing ghost stayed there
combing the ash in her hair,
until the grey light grew
and I awoke. (15-18)

The obvious rhyme is *there* and *hair*, and near rhyme can be heard in *ghost* and *awoke*. The stanza's primary vowel sound is the *o*, repeated in *glowing*, *ghost*, *combing*, and *awoke*. Additionally, one hears the *a* in *stayed* and *grey*.

Another example is "Homage to David Smith," (NUP) where word and sound repetition is heavy:

We are made of angle iron and crossbrace,
we live and we die
in the sunlight of polished steel,
in the night of painted iron. (1-4)

The paradox is that the stanza's repetition is easily distinguishable, yet subtle at the same time. Poetry, especially when rhyme, near rhyme, and repetition abound within, can hypnotize and draw its audience inward to its core. Haines's final two lines capture this poetic power, mostly due to the word repetition (*we*, *and*, *in*, *the*, *of*), near rhyme (*sunlight*, *night*), alliteration (*polished*, *painted*), and consonance (*t* sounds strewn throughout).

For Haines, many sounds do originate unconsciously, but the final effects remain, as he says, "mostly by attention to the sound in [his poems]." Specific sounds and images often result from Haines's conscious awareness regarding where to end a line, stanza, or the poem itself, and they linger long after the last word, as evident in "Smoke" (SH). In this poem's final stanza Haines heightens the impression of an animal's pain through his diction:

At sundown, it settled
 upon the house,
 its breath
 thick and choking . . . (16-19)

The repetition of the *k* in *thick* and *choking* forces one to pause each time, therefore emphasizing the words and their meanings. Similarly, "Men Against the Sky" (CIC) ends with a vivid sound and striking image that both resonate afterwards:

a dry lake filling with moonlight,
 and one old windmill,
 its broken arms
 clattering in the darkness. (18-21)

Haines's "old windmill," which he personifies, doesn't just make a little noise--it *clatters*. This haunting image loiters in one's mind long after the poem's "darkness," just as the branches' sounds in the final stanza of "Homestead" (NFG):

A battered dipper shines here
 in the dusk; the trees stand close,
 their branches are moving,
 in flight with the rustling of wings. (78-81)

This stanza and the previous one in "Men Against the Sky" contain similarities: celestial light, an inanimate object's movement, and visually-striking imagery. These of course are accompanied by poetic language and sound devices. Most noticeable in "Homestead" are the many *s* and *z* sounds that stir throughout the stanza and crescendo in "the rustling of wings."

Compare these sounds with the cracking sounds in "Woman on the Road" (*NFG*), especially with the simile in the final stanza's last line:

And turned and walked back
to her house still in the sun,
as the calm fall made
a noise like a broken stick. (27-30)

The last line, with its powerful and sharp-sounds, further succeeds due to its placement, which follows several fluid lines. Lots of *l* and *m* sounds precede (and contrast) the final line, which in turn generates a resonating image.

While sound played an instrumental role in Haines's development as a writer, so too did silence. Living alone in Richardson provided Haines with ample quiet time. Solitude can be a asset to a writer, and for Haines being alone provided him with the focus that was helpful. Haines was able to absorb his environment like a sponge, and more importantly, in his solitude he was able to really *listen* to his environment. A moose calling in the distance, thunderous ice breakage in the nearby river, branches cracking and popping--these were the sounds Haines typically heard; however, Haines often heard nothing at all . . . just pure silence. A repeating element in his poetry nonetheless, silence frequently makes its presence felt. In "The Tree That Became a House" (*CIC*) Haines ends his poem with two distinct sounds, followed by "silence":

My split heart creaks in the night
 around them,
 my dead cones drop in silence. (23-25)

Or the young man in "Poem of the Forgotten" (WN) who "awoke / in the first snow of autumn, / filled with silence" (9-12). The word *silence* appears many times throughout Haines's poetry, and this word best signifies Haines as a writer. Perhaps *silence*, as a specific sound, is the noise or lack of noise that he captures most all through his poetry. Even though normally one may not think of *silence* as a sound, in the midst of quietude *silence* reverberates to the point in which one cannot ignore its presence.

In his essay "Speech After Long Silence," friend and fellow poet Wendell Berry recalls having heard Haines during a poetry reading at Stanford in 1969: "His lines were qualified unremittingly by a silence that they came from and were going toward, they that for a moment broke" (25). Berry discusses how the wilderness, and its silence, impacted Haines's poetry: "Mr. Haines's poems . . . told that they were the work of a mind that had taught itself to be quiet for a long time" (25). It is this very silence that *makes noise* and pervades his poetry, as heard in "Passage" (CIC):

The dead go without a sound,
 the living squeak and finally pass.

A cricket sings on the other side;
 he disappears, and a man

on one leg hops and falls,
his mouth shaped in a silent cry. (5-10)

In this example Haines alternates sounds and images, and this technique makes the poem more graspable; in essence, Haines shows his audience what effect sound has.

In *Winter News*, Haines writes about "silences so deep / you can hear / the journeys of the soul" ("Listening in October" 14-16). He writes about a "keen silence" in the poem "At Slim's River" (CIC), and the "lesson in silence" by the crawling insect in "The Sun on Your Shoulder" (NFG). Jesse, the Indian girl, "stands / at the doorway in silence" in "Tenderfoot" (NP). From "Fairbanks Under the Solstice" (WN) Haines recalls the cold Alaskan nights in which those "who have died of the frost / word of the resurrection of Silence" (15-16). These silences, so prevalent in his poetry, in essence represent something Haines attempts to capsulize. Whether the *silence* mentioned in his poetry is indeed silence, or rather a state of mind or feeling, in each case one can hear sounds. These sounds usually fall within certain categories, or types of silences. The aforementioned poems represent various segments of Haines's life. "Passage" and "Fairbanks Under the Solstice" demonstrate the silence of death. "Listening in October" and "Tenderfoot" show the silence that exists between people and in relationships; "At Slim's River" and "The Sun on Your

Shoulder" exhibit the silence in nature. These categories mirror the world Haines knows and what he has experienced; they demonstrate that Haines wants his audience to not just read and listen, but imagine and contemplate. Haines's poems require one to see *and* hear. Haines is both painter and poet to his audience. These silences generally reflect the poem as a whole entity, and this is one reason why the word shows up so frequently--each scenario, in each poem, has its own silences in addition to sounds.

Among many of Haines's critics there is a silence in regard to *poetic sound* as a critical topic of conversation, specifically Haines's strong sound device usage and its connection with meaning. Many have discussed the various subjects that Haines has written about in his collection of poetry (e.g. nature, death, hunting, environment). Carolyn J. Allen's "Death and Dreams in John Haines's *Winter News*," William Studebaker's "Dreaming Existence: Mysticism in John Haines's Poetry," Sharon Klander's "The Language/Nature Cycle in John Haines's Poetry," and Kevin Walzer's "An Elegist's Dreams," represent the gamut of criticism produced.

Critics primarily view Haines in relationship to his wilderness writing, most notably his poetry (*Winter News; News from the Glacier*) and prose (*Living Off the Country: Essays on Poetry and Place; The Stars, the Snow, the Fire*).

During the past decade Haines has partly broken away from this nature-writer image by writing more about painting and sculpture, as is evident in *New Poems: 1980-88* and in section VIII--"New and Uncollected Poems (1993)"--in *The Owl in the Mask of the Dreamer*. With this departure, the focus among critics has understandably been towards his new subjects. Criticism concerning specific books, time periods, or aspects in his poetry (nature, mysticism) still gets generated; yet the majority of criticism lacks a close, critical approach pertaining to sound in his poetry. Consequently, in this paper I will analyze Haines's sound device usage, and I will do so by discussing a cross-selection of poems from his many books, including: *Winter News*, *The Stone Harp*, *Twenty Poems*, *Cicada*, *News from the Glacier*, and "New and Uncollected Poems (1993)" from *The Owl in the Mask of the Dreamer*.

We tend to forget that for many cultures throughout history, poetry is an oral tradition. Imagine Homer and other bards singing their creations only in the privacy of their own homes, or Robert Frost never giving a public reading. Poetry enthusiasts should pay close attention to Poet Laureate Robert Pinsky's declaration on poetry:

Poetry is a vocal, which is to say a bodily, art. The medium of poetry is a human body: the column of air inside the chest, shaped into signifying sounds in the larynx and the mouth. (8)

Unless one attends poetry readings or hears recordings by poets, this phenomenon is somehow forgotten, especially since there are so many more outlets that publish written works. Books, journals, magazines, periodicals, and the internet still remain the most popular mediums for poetry. Yet all of these fall short of what Pinsky declares as the best medium of all--the human body.

In the following chapter, I will demonstrate how sound plays a critical role throughout *Winter News* and many of Haines's subsequent books. One key aspect is that he uses sound in conjunction with meaning to create an overall poetic effect. Haines strategically places alliteration, assonance, consonance, cadence, and other sound devices throughout many of his poems. All of these contribute greatly to each poem's overall poetic sense because they appropriately fit within the poem's framework and meaning. When alliteration and other sound devices are intertwined in poetry with, for example, an Alaskan theme such as wilderness, the end result is usually greatly enhanced. "Fairbanks Under the Solstice" is the perfect example, with its heavy alliteration that mimics the frigid weather.

Thematically, Haines was fascinated with the wilderness that surrounded him. It was the mammoth presence of the landscape, Arctic cold, wind, animals, and especially death, that influenced Haines. These elements influenced Haines

not only as a poet and writer but also as a human being attempting to construct his home among them. It is important to note here where Haines lived because the Richardson region and its components constitute many of the subjects (particularly death) throughout his poetry, especially early in his career. Haines hunted and trapped wild game and lived off the land. Death was not uncommon to him, whether through the inescapable Arctic cold he depicts in "Winter News," the presence of death in "A Moose Calling," or the "fields of death" in the poem "Arlington." Consequently, death recurs as a motif in many poems; therefore, in chapter three I will examine a variety of "death" poems and illustrate how Haines views death, especially within the context of his wilderness surroundings. In addition, I will continue my discussion on sound and demonstrate that even in poems in which Haines focuses on a powerful motif such as death, sound remains a critical component that works with meaning to strengthen the overall poetic sense.

II. Sound in John Haines's Poetry

The early poems for which I am perhaps best known (*Winter News*) grew out of my experiences in the Alaskan wilderness. It is a poetry of solitude--to say it oversimply--but a peopled solitude. The subject matter is drawn mainly from nature and its citizens--animals, birds, trees, ice and weather, and the occasional human traveler. These things had their counterpart in my imagination--the durable stuff of childhood fantasies of life in the great north woods--and that as much as anything else gives the poems what significance they may have. They can be read as part of a continuing interior monologue, but it seems to me that they contain plenty of actual sticks and stones to stumble on and be bruised by.

John Haines (qtd. in McGovern 371)

Among the "sticks and stones" in Haines's poetry are poetic devices such as metaphor, simile, symbol, and imagery. Each one contributes its own specific effects, and these devices are certainly useful tools when discussing poetry. They have been addressed by critics in numerous essays on Haines's poetry, including Carolyn J. Allen's "Death and Dreams in John Haines's *Winter News*" and James R. Wilson's "Relentless Self-Scrutiny: The Poetry of John Haines"; nevertheless, one topic neglected its due attention is Haines's devotion to one of the most crucial poetic aspects: sound.

In their book *Understanding Poetry*, authors Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren state that "poetry is a kind of 'saying'" and in examining poetry one should be "characteristically concerned with aural (heard) rhythm,

that of sound" (1-2). During the creation process a poet must *choose* words. He or she may incorporate a specific motif or an emotion as a central focus, but ultimately the poem's substance is always going to be composed of *words*. The words themselves are at the forefront in every reading experience. As a reader, one may discover something thematic in a poem, but it is the poem itself (the words) that ends up *saying* to its readers. As poet and critic Donald Hall points out, "before we concentrate on the elements of poetry, let us look at the medium of poetry, which is words" (401). Words exhibit certain sounds, and because a poem is either read silently to oneself or spoken aloud, a poem's sounds are automatically heard. In contrast, a symbol or metaphor in a poem may not be apparent during an initial reading. Yet, even if a metaphor or a recurring motif is readily visible each will not be able to compete with the words themselves and the sounds they produce throughout. Sound is the first effect a word or group of words manifest. Robert Frost greatly exemplifies a poet who places emphasis on words and sound, as heard in the first stanza in "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening":

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. (1-4)

This stanza is rife with the *h* sound--*whose, his* (twice), *house, he, and here*. This repeated sound creates rhythm and emphasis, and Frost is a master at intertwining these in his poetry.

Sound Devices

Mary Oliver, the Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, says "to make a poem, we must make sounds. Not random sounds, but chosen sounds" (19). To make chosen sounds a poet needs to make use of sound devices such as alliteration, assonance, consonance, rhyme, and onomatopoeia. Haines, in his poetry, generally chooses his sounds because his attention to words is on his mind each occasion he writes. Haines remarks, "an attention to syllables, to vowels and consonants, seems to me immensely important" ("At White River" 123). For example, the first poem in *Winter News*, "If the Owl Calls Again," contains plenty of chosen sounds that enhance the poem, especially when read aloud, which Haines does to his own poetry: "I intend all my poems to be read aloud, since I speak them aloud as I write them" ("At White River" 123). Sound devices are used to give a poem texture, and without them a poem might as well be classified as flat prose. If used well, they can transform a good poem into a great one. Like most poets, Haines utilizes many different sound devices in his poetry; however, just to point these out

would be the equivalent to saying a wall has nails. Furthermore, the process of identifying alliteration and assonance only for the sake of discovering them would grow tiresome and lead one nowhere. The need to discover how these various devices propel a poem forward and help it achieve sound texture is what ultimately matters. Just as nails keep a wall from falling down, sounds keep a poem from dying. They give a poem life.

Attention to Detail

In *How Does a Poem Mean?* authors John Ciardi and Miller Williams discuss "the play impulse," or what Frost calls "the pleasure of taking pains" (5). For many writers the most exciting part in the poetic process is the actual *doing*, and this dictates why Haines and other poets pay close attention to syllables, vowels, and consonants. This attention to detail and form is echoed by Ciardi:

No matter how serious the overt message of a poem, the unparaphraseable and undiminishable life of a poem lies in the way it performs itself through the difficulties it imposes upon itself. The way *in which* it means is *what* it means. (6)

Ciardi's belief best summarizes the poetic process, and even though he refers to the gamut of technical devices used in poetry, his conviction is nonetheless pertinent to word play and sound devices.

In relationship to sound in poetry, one critical question should be asked after reading a poem: "What significance do various sound devices have in the poem?" Other questions might include: 1) How do an array of similar sounds affect a poem? 2) Does the poet use sound devices well? In the remainder of chapter two various poems and their sound components will be discussed, and I will provide a detailed analysis, within Haines's wilderness-thematic context, that pertains to the numerous sound devices in the following poems from *Winter News*, *The Stone Harp*, and *New Poems: 1980-88* (three books published at different times during a period of twenty-four years): "If the Owl Calls Again," "Fairbanks Under the Solstice," "Divided, the Man is Dreaming," "The Way We Live," and "Little Cosmic Dust Poem." Additionally, within this framework, when applicable, I will briefly discuss other pertinent poems from Haines's poetry work. This paper will demonstrate how sounds do indeed help propel these poems along and how they contribute to each poem's overall effect.

Classification of Letters

In her book, *A Poetry Handbook*, Mary Oliver uses an older text--*Brown's Grammar Improved* (1860) by Goold Brown--as the basis for her chapters on sound in poetry. Oliver says it is reasonable for one to suppose she would turn to a

more modern text; however, she states that when she discovered Brown's book on one of her book shelves she was compelled to use it because of its richness and provocative nature. Oliver states how she isn't trained in linguistics and that she only uses Brown's book to make a few useful and important points about sound. I am not trained in linguistics, either, but by using Brown's text as the basis for my analysis on the various sounds that occur in Haines's poems I will reveal the "sticks and stones" in each. Brown's acute breakdown pertaining to the classes and power of letters--especially consonants--is pertinent to any discussion on sound because this clearly is a topic that has a rich history; Brown says the classification of letters

is of very great antiquity, and, in respect to its principal features, sanctioned by almost universal authority. Aristotle, three hundred and thirty years before Christ, divided the Greek letters into *vowels*, *semivowels*, and *mutés*, and declared that no syllable could be formed without a vowel.
(21)

Furthermore, in his grammar text, Brown discusses his own classification of letters:

The letters are divided into two general classes, *vowels* and *consonants*. A vowel . . . forms a perfect sound when uttered alone . . . A consonant . . . cannot be perfectly uttered till joined with a vowel; as, b, c, d. The vowels are a, e, i, o, u, and sometimes w and y. All the other letters are consonants. W or y is called a consonant when it precedes a vowel heard in the same syllable; as in *wine*, *twine*, *whine*; *ye*, *yet*, *youth*: in all other cases, these letters are vowels; as in *newly*, *dewy*, *eyebrow*.

A *semivowel* is a consonant which can be imperfectly sounded without a vowel so that at the end of a syllable its sound may be protracted; as, *l, n, z*, in *al, an, az* . . . The semivowels are *f, h, j, l, m, n, r, s, v, w, x, y, z*, and *c* and *g* soft: but, *w* or *y* at the end of a syllable is a vowel; and the sound of *c, f, g, h, j, s*, or *x*, can be protracted only as an *aspirate*, or strong breath. Four of the semivowels--*l, m, n*, and *r*,--are termed *liquids*, on account of the fluency of their sounds; and four others,--*v, w, y*, and *z*,--are likewise more vocal than the aspirates.

A *mute* is a consonant which cannot be sounded at all without a vowel, and which at the end of a syllable suddenly stops the breath; as, *k, p, t*, in *ak, ap, at*. The mutes are eight; *b, d, k, p, q, t*, and *c* and *g* hard: three of these--*k, q*, and *c* hard--sound exactly alike: *b, d*, and *g* hard stop the voice less suddenly than the rest. (20-21)

Brown's alphabet dissection demonstrates how there are groups of sounds rather than random sounds. Vowels, consonants, semivowels, mutes, aspirates, and liquids form the components of words, which not only have definitions and connotations, but as Oliver points out, "[a] *felt* quality of their own kind of sound" (22). Therefore, the words and letters a poet chooses play a pivotal part in the final poetic texture. Key sound devices such as assonance, consonance, and alliteration help achieve specific sounds, and these devices are most readily apparent when a poet carefully places them into a poem. In the following poems

by Haines, the words' "felt quality" derive from particular groups of sounds, and uniquely contribute to a poetic sound and sense.

Searching with Tawny Eyes

An appropriate place to begin is with "If the Owl Calls Again," from *Winter News*. This poem, in particular, contains numerous sound examples, and as I will illustrate, the poem's "felt quality" results from both sound and meaning working in unison. Examples are plentiful, such as the lingering resonance of *rise* in "I'll wait for the moon / to rise," (4-5), in which a particular line's sounds enhance the described image. Haines's overall diction gives the poem a sound texture that calls out to his audience much as the owl in the poem, who at dusk, calls the poem's speaker to fly with it. Active images of hunting and flying pervade the poem, but the major impact comes from Haines's creative sound elements:

If the Owl Calls Again

at dusk
from the island in the river,
and it's not too cold,

I'll wait for the moon
to rise,
then take wing and glide
to meet him.

We will not speak,
but hooded against the frost
soar above

the alder flats, searching
with tawny eyes.

And then we'll sit
in the shadowy spruce and
pick the bones
of careless mice,

while the long moon drifts
toward Asia
and the river mutters
in its icy bed.

And when morning climbs
the limbs
we'll part without a sound,

fulfilled, floating
homeward as
the cold world awakens.

The first stanza is full of mutes [d, k, t, c (hard), g (hard)--at, dusk, island, and, not, and cold]. In the first line, which is actually the phrasal unit's end including the title, Haines uses two mutes--t and k in at and dusk. These consonants force the breath to stop suddenly; there are also three other t's in the stanza--it's, not, and too. Continuing sounds: including the title, there are four instances of l's--Owl, Calls, island, and cold; three sets of th--the (three times), two c's--calls and cold, and five n's--Again, island, in, and, and not.

In addition to the examples of mutes, the title and the first stanza are also rife with liquids (l, m, n, and r--owl, calls, again, from, and river). The title "If the Owl Calls Again" rolls off the tongue and resonates, as if the

speaker is dreaming. Line one shatters the title's resonance with its mutes, and the second line is the stanza's most liquid. As line one does to the title, so does line three to the second line:

If the Owl Calls Again

at dusk
from the island in the river,
and it's not too cold,

This roller-coaster effect of alternating liquids and mutes makes the speaker seem hesitant. The overwhelming presence of mutes in the stanza's last line (*t* in it's, not, too; hard *c* in gold) echo the speaker's mood: only if it isn't too cold will the speaker go out and join the owl.

Haines continues to use mutes in the second stanza: wait, to, take, to, and meet. *Wait* is an appropriate word choice because the *t* forces the reader to stop. The stanza's remaining lines are very rhythmic; here Haines incorporates slant rhyme with *rise* and *glide*. Both of these words elicit rising and gliding images due to the precise sounds they produce: the liquid *r* and the *z* sounds in rise, and the liquid *l* in glide.

Assonance has a strong stanza presence in the *oo* sound in moon and to, which also illustrates Haines's use of repetition. In the first two stanzas alone there are four instances of the *oo* sound in *too*. This is not coincidental;

the sound repetition mimics an owl's cry. Haines only uses this particular vowel sound two more times throughout, and this affirms his initial usage in the first two stanzas. The owl's call echoes in the speaker's mind at the poem's beginning, and the speaker dreams what will happen if the owl does indeed call.

"We will not speak," the speaker's voice declares in the third stanza. Here Haines continues to use the liquid *l* and the mutes *t* and *k*. The *k* in *speak* effectively forces a sudden stop, and then the line break after *speak* compounds this effect. This stoppage reinforces the line's statement, and at this point the reader is left to wonder what will happen after they meet. This is Haines at his best, knowing the right time to pause. In the stanza's second line, which contains three words ending in *t*, Haines contrasts the prior line and uses enjambment. The mute *t* in *frost* adds to the line break's success, as evident in *speak* from the previous line. The stanza's remaining lines contrast the first two lines, primarily due to Haines's pace change. The short line "soar above," which follows the stanza's longest line, stands out because the line break and sounds are emphasized tremendously. The aspirate *s* in *soar* glides off the tongue, only to be followed by the vocal *v* sound in *above*. Overall this is an extremely resonating line. More resonance

results from the consonance in speak, against, frost, soar, flats, and searching. This stanza in relation to consonance strength prepares one for the last stanza, which displays even more consonance.

Additionally, notice how Haines often breaks his lines after verbs. Donald Hall says "with free verse, which lacks any regular beat, the line becomes the major way of organizing sound" (448). This becomes evident after reading Haines's lines. In fact, Haines breaks the line after a verb ten times in all, but nowhere in the poem does the sound and enjambment combination seem more perfect than in the penultimate line in stanza three. The verb "searching" slows down the previous phrasal unit with the aspirate *s* and stops completely on the hard *g* of *ing*. At this juncture, there is indeed a brief moment during which searching takes place, a "searching / with tawny eyes." Stanza four uniquely sets itself apart because every other stanza exhibits brief moments of silence due to severe line breaks. As previously noted, Haines consciously refers to silence throughout his poetry; the line breaks below are subtle tools that force silence upon the reader (bold **silence** is for emphasis only and is not part of the poem):

at dusk **silence**
 from the island in the river,
 and it's not too cold, (stanza one)

I'll wait for the moon
 to rise, **silence**
 then take wing and glide (stanza two)

 while the long moon drifts
 toward Asia **silence**
 and the river mutters (stanza five)

 And when the morning climbs
 the limbs **silence**
 we'll part without a sound, (stanza six)

 fulfilled, floating
 homeward as **silence**
 the cold world awakens. (stanza seven)

These line breaks achieve silence, especially since the lines themselves sharply contrast the longer lines before and after them. As a result, a stillness permeates the poem, and the speaker's indecisive mind becomes more apparent.

Not every stanza contains severe line breaks however. Stanza four, which doesn't contain any severe line breaks, is the poem's most rhythmic. And if it were not for the line break at *and* in the second line, the stanza could be scanned as iambic dimeter with the only exception in line two, in which the two feet are anapest. The fact remains that Haines does break the second line with the feminine ending *and*; however, this does nothing to hinder the stanza's rhythm when read aloud. When spoken, the stanza's rhythm moves quickly and smoothly, the latter due to strong consonance: the *s* sound in sit, spruce, careless, and mice.

These s sounds, along with (l, and t, as in "while the long moon drifts / toward Asia") dominate the fifth stanza but actually pervade the entire poem: t and s twenty-three times and l twenty-one times. The words moon and mutters, along with the word mice from the last line in stanza four and morning from the first line in stanza six, deliver vibrant alliteration in this section. Up until this stage Haines refrains from using the sound device onomatopoeia, but now he breaks the third line with the word mutters, followed by the last line in the stanza:

and the river mutters
in its icy bed. (19-20)

Haines's decision to use the word mutters works for another reason as well. In addition to alliteration and onomatopoeia, mutters also contains the much-repeated consonance sound t. Repetition in poetry cannot be stressed enough. Its very presence in language "is one of the weapons in the armory of poetry" declares scholar Helen Vendler (159). Once more, Haines highlights repetition in this stanza. Not only is the assonance of i in if and river present in every stanza (fifteen instances overall), but here Haines uses assonance four times: drifts, river, in, and its.

The penultimate stanza continues the poem's resonance, just in a different manner. When read aloud, stanza six resonates primarily through the first two lines:

And when morning climbs
the limbs
we'll part without a sound, (21-23)

Climbs and *limbs* have similar sounds; other than different vowel sounds, each has a strong *l* sound and both words vibrate on the tongue after they have been spoken. The *z* sound *s* makes in each word effectively and sharply contrasts the *s* in *sound* in the stanza's last line. Indeed, both the speaker and reader leave without a sound. The ending word, *sound*, contrasts the sharp mutes in *part* and *without*. Consequently, *sound*, and the resonating *climbs* and *limbs*, takes the reader quietly to the final stage.

Appropriately, Haines ends his poem just as he begins, abounding with *l* sounds:

fulfilled, floating
homeward as
the cold world awakens. (24-26)

In this final stanza Haines uses more alliteration, as heard in *fulfilled* and *floating*; nevertheless, mutes continue their dominance (*c* and *k* in *cold* and *awakens* in the last line). The final word, interestingly enough, ends not on a mute but on the resonance in *awakens*--no sudden stops, just the cold world's lingering voice at dusk.

The Power of Illumination

"Fairbanks Under the Solstice," also from *Winter News*, teems with alliteration, consonance, and assonance, and is representative of Haines's prolific sound usage. In this poem he details the harsh and deadly Alaskan winter by using a common morning scenario:

Fairbanks Under the Solstice

Slowly, without sun, the day sinks
toward the close of December.
It is minus sixty degrees.

Over the sleeping houses a dense
fog rises--smoke from banked fires,
and the snowy breath of an abyss
through which the cold town
is perceptibly falling.

As if Death were a voice made visible,
with the power of illumination . . .

Now, in the white shadow
of those streets, ghostly newsboys
make their rounds, delivering
to the homes of those
who have died of the frost
word of the resurrection of Silence.

In "Fairbanks Under the Solstice" sounds strengthen Haines's imagery of "Death," or "Silence" as he equates at the end of his poem. In the beginning the poem starts with a rash of *s* sounds in the first stanza, most noticeably in the title and first line:

Fairbanks Under the Solstice

Slowly, without sun, the day sinks
toward the close of December.
It is minus sixty degrees. (1-3)

The alliteration in *solstice*, *slowly*, *sun*, and *sinks* inject a hissing sound into the poem, an aspect that brings to mind an image of a balloon losing its air, its very essence of being. The December day slowly loses its own essence as the cold darkness consumes its life. Another image Haines evokes here is the serpent, a deathlike figure, and its hissing sounds. Both the balloon and serpent imagery, with their strong alliteration *s* sounds, foreshadows the death to come in the remaining stanzas.

Haines's alliteration usage in this poem from *Winter News* creates a desired effect, much as he later achieves in "The Man Who Skins Animals" in *Twenty Poems*:

Its eyes are bright, but
what they see is not this world
 but some other place
 where the wind, warm
 and well fed, sleeps
 on a deep, calm water. (12-17)

In contrast to the serpent's cold, hissing sounds that evoke death in "Fairbanks Under the Solstice," the reader experiences the wind and water's warmth.

As Haines does in "If the Owl Calls Again," he uses the liquid letters *l*, *m*, *n*, and *r* in "Fairbanks Under the Solstice." The liquids in *solstice*, *slowly*, *sun*, *sinks*, *close*, *December*, and *minus*, combine with the aspirate *s* (*solstice*, *slowly*, *sun*, *sinks*, *December*, and *minus*) to shape sound and meaning in the stanza. In addition to the

alliteration (*s*), consonance also appears in *Fairbanks*, *Solstice*, *sinks*, *December*, and *minus*. To contrast the hissing sounds Haines incorporates the mute *d* in *day*, *December*, and *degrees* at the end in the first three lines, not just for alliteration but also to underscore the quiet coldness the image elicits; these words jolt the soft hissing with their forceful thudding. Of special interest is how *December* stands out in this stanza. The month is frigid and dark for Alaskans and the mute *b* reverberates so that the syllable *ber*, in punlike fashion, reinforces the cold, minus-sixty-degree weather: *Decembrrrrrrrrr*. In the next line *degrees* also reverberates, although not quite in the same manner. The *s* acts as *z*, so rather than "minus sixty degrees" one hears "minus sixty degreezzzzz." Haines further dictates desired sounds with assonance. The *oh* sound in *solstice* repeats in *slowly* and *close*, and the *i* sound in *without* emerges all throughout the last line: *it*, *is*, *minus*, and *sixy*. Both assonance instances frequent stanza two: *over*, *smoke*, *snowy*, and *cold*; *rises*, *abyss*, *which*, *is*, and *perceptibly* respectively.

Aside from the previous assonance examples, stanza two contains several other sound devices that connect with similar ones throughout the poem:

Over the sleeping houses a dense
fog rises--smoke from banked fires,
and the snowy breath of an abyss

through which the cold town
is perceptibly falling. (4-8)

Most noticeable are the s (underlined) and **z** (bold) sounds that dominate stanza one [underlined and bold letters are for effect only and are not part of the poem]. Every line in the second stanza, except for one, contains these particular sounds. The alliteration in sleeping, smoke, and snowy connect with the consonance in dense, abyss, and perceptibly. Haines also uses alliteration in the words fog, from, and fires in line two and falling in the last line; furthermore, he produces three more instances in which consonance is heavy: **z**, **l**, and **th** sounds. All three, along with the many s sounds, constitute the majority of sounds in the poem. In the first line, the **z** sound in houses is followed by rises and fires in the next line. The **l** in sleeping doesn't show up until the stanza's final two lines, three times within the stanza's last five words: cold, perceptibly, and falling. This particular sound's repetition and liquidity mimics what Haines describes and is similar to how the s sound works in the poem's first line.

The primary sound component in stanza three is the assonance i sound in if, visible, with, and illumination. The secondary device, the repetitive **th** sound from Death in line one and with and the in the second, compounds the assonance. The only remaining sound example is the v sound,

as in *voice* and *visible*. These two help highlight the importance *Death* has. More vocal than most aspirates, the *v* in these two words, particularly in such close proximity to each other, accentuates the prior word, *Death*.

In his final stanza Haines once again uses repetitive sounds to create rhythm. Most noticeable are the sounds forged by *th* in lines one through six (seven times) and the word *of* in every line except one and three. Here, Haines excessively uses *of* (five times total, but four in the last three lines), and unfortunately this confers passivity and redundancy. Conversely, the recurring *of*, especially in the last three lines, sharply contrasts the poem's final word: *Silence*. As the *v* in *voice* and *visible* from the previous stanza illuminate *Death*, so too does the *v* sound in *of* illuminate the word *Silence*. One should also notice the onomatopoeia present in *Silence*. Other than the liquid *l* in the middle, the repeated *s* sound in the word's beginning and end generates a resonating whisper that summons silence--death's silence.

A Thoreavian Paradise

A different sort of silence resonates, in addition to the many thematic points, after reading Haines's short poem, "The Way We Live" (*SH*). Foremost, Haines's critical and sarcastic tone early in the poem, which contrasts the

overall descriptive "Fairbanks Under the Solstice," evolves into a soothing scene of solitude and nature. This poem, and its Thoreauvian simplicity, could easily represent Haines's own feelings when he first decided to homestead in Alaska. Fragments of the poem's individualistic character find their way into other poems, such as "Poem of the Forgotten," just as certain sound qualities do. Even though the tone in "The Way We Live" contrasts with "Fairbanks Under the Solstice," the two poems share some striking similarities. Numerous *s* and *z* sounds also abound via alliteration and consonance in "The Way We Live," and the remaining sounds combine to produce a variety of subtleties:

The Way We Live

Having been whipped through Paradise
and seen humanity
strolling like an overfed beast
set loose from its cage,
a man may long for nothing so much
as a house of snow,
a blue stone for a lamp,
and a skin to cover his head.

Each line exhibits alliteration and consonance involving *s*, including its *z* sounds (*as*, *his*): *Paradise*, *seen*, *strolling*, *beast*, *set*, *loose*, *its*, *so*, *house*, *snow*, *stone*, and *skin*. These repeated sounds establish a slippery undercurrent that connects well with the poem's sarcasm. Additional alliteration examples display themselves in *Having*, *humanity*, *house*, *his*, and *head*; *like*, *loose*, *long*,

and *lamp*; and in line five alone--*man*, *may*, and *much*; furthermore, as in "Fairbanks Under the Solstice," the title itself and the first line contain repeated key sounds: alliteration (*way*, *we*, and *whipped*), consonance (*th* in *The* and *through*; *v* in *live* and *Having*).

A poem's title, often overlooked when explicating poetry, should be equally examined along with the other lines. In "The Way We Live," Haines's title, especially due to the poem's short length, is crucial in regard to sound and meaning. In addition to the alliteration usage, Haines sets his poem's mood early by including the pronoun *we* in the title; Haines's reference points to society, and the "man" could clearly be himself since he left societal comforts for simplicity in a remote area outside of Fairbanks, Alaska. The poem's title, in essence, assesses blame on society but also divulges why one would settle down away from everyone else.

The first few lines, and specific sounds, contrast the poem's remaining lines; lines one and two, with their vocal *v* and *w* sounds, forcefully speed by until they hit the smooth *strolling* in line three, followed by the tranquil words *snow* and *stone* in lines six and seven. In fact, one is practically "whipped" through line one due to the verb's onomatopoeia. The pace speeds up at this point in the line, and most likely Haines uses *whipped*, with its negative

connotation, to elicit both fast, forceful, and contrasting images. The close proximity between *whipped* and *Paradise* ironically suggests a connecting relationship. One strong possibility exists that Haines is referring to religion here. From a literal standpoint, whipping did, and still does to an extent, take place within religious circles. *Paradise* may well refer to society, and *whipping* might be used figuratively, but knowing that Haines was raised as a Catholic prior to Vatican II¹ the most suggestive angle is the religious one. Flogging was sometimes used as a means of punishment for misbehavior, and various individuals practiced penance by scourging themselves. When one assumes this particular view, subtle line breaks after key words with religious undertones become more apparent: *humanity* (line two), *beast* (line three), *lamp* (line seven). At the end of line six, *snow*, with its whiteness and purity, also could be included in this group. As is the case with line breaks, words, and their sound qualities, are often enhanced. This is the beauty of poetry. During the process one must not only carefully choose words, but one must place them well throughout.

¹ Richard P. McBrien, in *Catholicism*, says "The Second Vatican Council was the largest and most representative council in the Church's history . . . With this council, the Church began its movement from a Church of cultural confinement to a genuine world Church." The council met between 1962-1965. (3, 686)

Two Identities

In similar fashion to "If the Owl Calls Again" and "Fairbanks Under the Solstice," "Divided, the Man is Dreaming" (WN) contains a variety of sounds that enhance its overall meaning. This poem differs due to its harsher, and less subtle, death references. The two stanzas contrast each other through sound and meaning. Stanza one focuses on the hunter, and its sounds derive from sharp-sounding mutes (t, k); stanza two details the calm side of the man's identity. This half is described with soft sounds such as aspirates (s, l). "Divided, the Man is Dreaming," a poem about the human dichotomy in the wilderness, contains specific sounds that represent each separate identity:

Divided, the Man is Dreaming

One half
lives in sunlight; he is
the hunter and calls
the beasts of the field
about him.
Bathed in sweat and tumult
he slakes and kills,
eats meat
and knows blood.

His other half
lies in shadow
and longs for stillness,
a corner of the evening
where birds
rest from flight:
cool grass grows at his feet,
dark mice feed
from his hands.

In this poem line breaks are extremely vital to *how* the poem sounds. Haines appropriately breaks the first line after "One half," and again in stanza two's first line--"His other half." Not only do both line breaks stress the word "half" visually, but they stress in an auditory sense as well. One cannot help but linger on the aspirate *f* in "half" before moving to the next line. In "Divided, the Man is Dreaming" Haines uses enjambment throughout, and several times the sound heard at the end of one line will repeat itself at the same spot in one of the following lines. For example, in the first stanza Haines places words with *z* sounds (*is* and *calls* in lines two and three, and *kills* in line seven) at the same part in each line--at the line break. The repetitive *z* sound, more vocal than an aspirate, provides each section with an appropriate dreamlike hum. Two other words in stanza one fit this pattern; however, in these instances the mute *t* is heard: *tumult* at the end of line six and *meat* in line eight. Specific sounds don't reoccur at the end of lines as much in stanza two; yet, in lines six and seven the mute *t*, present in the first stanza, is evident again (*flight* and *feet* respectively). In connection with these line breaks, *feed* ends line eight, and at this point--in lines six, seven, and eight--three consecutive lines break with words that begin with *f*:

flight, feet, and feed. These words exhibit alliteration and consonance, and importantly these pivotal points highlight sound.

In *New Poems: 1980-88*, Haines uses this technique in "Death and the Miser":

and stop your ears,
as with his steely, measuring
click
 click
 the gold-eating
beetle of death
 climbs nearer. (40-46)

The mute *k*'s sharpness in *click* repeats itself, followed by an alternating line pattern rarely seen in Haines's poetry. In this particular poem the line placements work well because they simulate the beetle's movement, and they emphasize specific sounds and images.

As previously discussed, a poet may use many sound devices throughout a poem. In "Divided, the Man is Dreaming" Haines uses a multitude in stanza one--rhyme, near rhyme, assonance, consonance, and repetition. Haines's subtle use of rhyme gives the poem's first three lines a bit of background rhythm [the capitalized letters are for illustration purposes]: "ONE half / lives in SUNlight; he is / the HUNter and calls" (1-3). Haines doesn't typically incorporate straight rhyme into his poems; however, in line eight he writes "eats meat." The only other rhyming word is *feet*--line seven in stanza two--which closely rhymes with

feed in the following line. Most likely, words that rhyme will appear separated in his poems: line two's *sunlight* rhymes with *flight* (line six in stanza two). Near rhyme more commonly occurs; an example is the word *beasts*, the only other word that closely rhymes with the phrase "eats meat." Primarily, sounds present themselves more via assonance and consonance. Assonance frequently occurs in the sound *uh*, as in *one* and *the*, as well as eight other different words throughout the poem. In stanza one alone, the *uh* sound repeats nine separate times in the following order: *one*, *sunlight*, *the*, *hunter*, *the*, *of*, *the*, *blood*, and *about*. Another prominent recurring sound in stanza one is the *i* sound in *lives*. Haines repeats this particular vowel sound two separate times in the word *in*, also evident in *is* and *him*. These examples demonstrate the importance Haines places on repetition, but for more evidence one must look to his extended consonance usage. The most frequent consonant sounds are the liquids *n* and *l*, and the mute *t*. Ten words in the first stanza produce sounds with *n*: *one*, *in* (twice), *sunlight*, *hunnter*, *and* (four times), and *knows*. Eight *l* sounds: *lives*, *sunlight*, *calls*, *field*, *tumultl*, *slakes*, *kills*, and *blood*. The mute *t* is evident nine times: *sunlightt*, *hunter*, *beasts*, *aboutt*, *sweatt*, *tumultt* (twice), *eats*, and *meatt*. Other mutes such as *d*, *b*, and *k* (or hard *c*)

appear fourteen times in stanza one. While assonance and consonance convey strong sound senses, one must examine the enjambment and diction used. Haines's quick line-turns force one to accentuate certain sounds, a tactic which also dictates pace; moreover, the words themselves stand out, as Haines generally demonstrates frugality with his word usage. In the first stanza alone the combined word-repetition total is nine: *he*--twice; *the*--three times; *and*--four times. These repeated words form a subtle rhythm that works well in combination with the other sound aspects.

Haines mainly employs alliteration, repetition, and consonance in the last half of the poem, the second identity. The first apparent sound device, alliteration, becomes evident in line one--"His other half," and later in the last line--"his hands." Lines two and three showcase the liquid *l*, present in *lies* and *longs*. Alliteration also prominently emerges as a featured sound device in stanza two's first four lines. Haines's prolific use of the semivowel *f* is heard in *from* (twice), *flight*, *feet*, and *feed*. Hidden within the third-to-last line in this stanza's sound proliferation is another alliteration example, "grass grows." Haines further underscores several sounds through repetition. The first word in stanza two, *His*, comes forth two more times, including the last line "from his hands." Additionally, *from*, present just three lines earlier in

"rest from flight," compounds this repetition. Finally, in similar fashion to stanza one, Haines uses consonance as a method to achieve sound emphasis. The liquids *n* (seven words--in, and, longs, stillness, corner, evening, and hands) and *l* (five words--lies, longs, stillness, flight, and cool) almost proliferate as much as they do in stanza one--ten and nine respectively. The liquid *l* repetition gives stanza two appropriate sound texture. The fluid humming produced by this stanza provides a peaceful and tranquil state that the sharp mutes and overall aggressive tone in stanza one do not. After all, the "other half" as Haines writes, is one that "lies in shadow / and longs for stillness" (11-12). He is not the hunter, or the first half, that "slakes and kills, / eats meat / and knows blood" (7-9). Haines not only uses specific diction to separate the two distinct personalities, but he uses specific sounds within certain words that appropriately describe each stanza's character. This is precisely how sound adds meaning to this poem, one whose thematically strong stanzas benefit from the sound connections.

White with Frost

A poem that displays a different thematic context but echoes similar sound devices to previously discussed poems is "Little Cosmic Dust Poem." This poem, which ties in with

the overall sound/meaning discussion due to its numerous examples, shows up in one of Haines's later books, *New Poems: 1980-88*, which was published almost twenty-five years after *Winter News*. Even though the majority of poems in his latter book are about art and history, Haines still writes about place and nature, as evident in "Tenderfoot," "Rain Country," and "Ancestor of the Hunting Heart":

It is dusk back there, the road
is empty and the log house quiet.

Jessie, the Indian girl, stands
at the doorway in silence,
her thin face turned to the earth. ("Tenderfoot" 1-5)

From "Rain Country":

The woods are sodden,
and the last leaves
tarnish and fall.

Thirty-one years ago
this rainy autumn
we walked home from the lake,
Campbell and Peg and I,
over the shrouded dome,
the Delta wind in our faces,
home through the drenched
and yellowing woodland. (1-11)

And from "Ancestor of the Hunting Heart":

The distance is closer than
the broomswept hearth--
that time of year when leaves
cling to the bootsole,
are tracked indoors,
lie yellow on the kitchen floor. (11-16)

Whereas "Little Cosmic Dust Poem" does not fit in the same category as these poems or his earlier hunting and

animal poems, it still focuses on nature, just on a grander scale, illustrating Haines's growth as a poet. It is a scale that requires a different poetic language as Sharon Klander details in her essay, "The Language/Nature Cycle in John Haines's Poetry":

This move is the first indication that the fundamental language of snow and smoke, moss and timber, horn and bird that Haines required to break the silence and move toward relationship in the Alaskan wilderness is no longer sufficient in picturing the natural world as he sees it out of the wilderness. (38)

As a result, Haines's "wilderness" boundary now stretches to the sun and stars. This transition from a poetic language derived from his immediate wilderness surroundings to a language of stars, particles, and dust allows Haines to expand his subject matter while using new terminology.

Little Cosmic Dust Poem

Out of the debris of dying stars,
that rains of particles
that water the waste with brightness . . .

The sea-wave of atoms hurrying home,
collapse of the giant,
unstable guest who cannot stay . . .

The sun's heart reddens and expands,
his mighty aspiration is lasting,
as the shell of his substance
one day will be white with frost.

In the radiant fields of Orion
great hordes of stars are forming,
just as we see every night,
fiery and faithful to the end.

Out of the cold and fleeing dust
 that is never and always,
 the silence and waste to come . . .

This arm, this hand,
 my voice, your face, this love.

Contrary to the title, there is nothing "little" in this poem. First, Haines uses lots of consonance in stanza one. Including the title, Haines scatters the mute *t* throughout nine times, similar to his "rain of particles": *Little, Dust, Out, stars, that, waters, waste, and brightness*. The aspirate *s*, audible in every stanza, impacts the stanza's ending. While the poem's initial tone results from the resonating *z* sound in *stars* and *particles* at the end of line one and two, line three sets itself apart due to the *s* sound in *brightness*. One must linger on the *s* sound, and because Haines follows *brightness* with an ellipsis the effect increases. The "rain of particles" and their brightness become even brighter resulting from the *s* sound and ellipsis. In the next line, alliteration, prominent in *the* (twice), *this*, and *that*, is distinct, especially with the string of *w* sounds: "*that waters the waste with brightness . . .*" Add the alliteration and mute *d* in *debris* and *dying* from line one, as well as *Dust* in the title, and a fine balance between aspirates and mutes results.

Resonating sounds continue in stanza two, particularly in line one: "The sea-wave of atoms hurrying home." The subtle humming sound of atoms "hurrying home" [note the alliteration] hides in the *v* sounds evident in sea-waveve and off, and the *m* sounds in atoms, and home; moreover, the *ing* in *hurrying* interconnects with these as well. The explosives in line two and three (collapse, giant, guest, cannot) shatter the previous steady hum. These mutes intermix with many *s* sounds (collapse, unstable, guest, stay) to form a unique sound texture that describes a star's demise. Both beauty and destruction inhabit these lines, and in an auditory sense Haines details this through aspirates and mutes. Each sound quality demonstrates a different tone, and Haines uses both types equally well. As in stanza one, the last line ends on a lingering note and an ellipsis. The "unstable guest who cannot stay . . ." differs from the previous comparison, though, because the final note contains a vowel sound rather than consonance. Both lines effectively convey sounds, but in stanza two the irony is that the star "cannot stay" even though Haines emphasizes *stay*. While *cannot* is brief and forceful, *stay*, with its long *a* sound, emphasizes more, especially with the ellipsis.

Haines continues to pay close attention to certain words via alliteration and consonance. The *h* sound in *who*, from the last line in stanza two, reappears in *heart* and *his* (twice) in stanza three. More obvious is the *z* sound in *sun's*, *reddens*, and *expands* (line one); *his* (lines two and three); *is* (line two); *as* (line three). Stanza two's humming sound continues here as a result, and along with the many *n* and *s* sounds sprinkled throughout stanza three Haines dictates the pace to his readers. As he does in stanza one, Haines finishes strongly with alliteration: "one day will be white with frost." Everyone knows that frost is white, and one might very well substitute the word *covered*; however, *white* gives the poem color and it rhymes with *might* in *mighty*, two lines prior; and of course it succeeds within this alliteration string. The explosive stoppage of *frost* contrasts the sun's warm, red heart, but some day "his substance . . . will be white with frost." The aspirate *s* and mute *t* in *frost*, both cold, differ greatly from the warm *z* and *m* sounds in stanza two. *Frost*, even though it ends abruptly, begins with a drawn-out *f* sound that extends until the explosive *t* is heard. This extended consonance sound similarly echoes previous stanza endings, yet because the sound appears at the beginning rather than the end of the word, it differs in this respect.

Two primary sounds present themselves next. First, the humming sounds, originally heard in stanza two and three, dominate the first two lines in stanza four (*n* sounds included):

In the radiant fields of Orion
great hordes of stars are forming,

The humming symbolizes action and movement just as it does in the previous two stanzas. Additionally, Haines uses alliteration, also prominent in the previous two stanzas. In stanza four Haines carefully places *fields*, *forming*, *fiery*, and *faithful*. Combined with frost from stanza three's last line, field and forming prepare one for the blast in stanza four's final line: "fiery and faithful to the end." The next stanza's opening line further enhances the above alliteration: "Out of the cold and fleeing dust." Consequently, within six lines six instances of alliteration and the aspirate *f* abound.

The only significant alliteration following stanza four emerges in the *th* sound, as in *the*, equaled only by the repetition of *and*:

Out of the cold *and* fleeing dust
that is never *and* always,
the silence *and* waste to come . . . (stanza five 15-17)

Haines returns to the ellipsis once again, and similarly to *brightness* and *stay* a resonating sound once again can be

heard. The *m* in *come*, compounded by the ellipsis, produces the previously heard humming sound. Haines refers to the future here, and appropriately he leads directly into the final stanza:

This arm, this hand,
my voice, your face, this love. (18-19)

There is a simple elegance in these lines. Death and life, "silence and waste to come . . .,"--these can consume the mind with thought. Ultimately, what Haines points to in "Little Cosmic Dust Poem" is the human race and spirit: "love." Don Bogen, in "Faithful to the End: John Haines's Poetry Since 1980," elaborates on this universal theme:

Haines's assertion of this positive vision in the face of "waste and silence" is augmented by the strictly iambic rhythm of the couplet, seen nowhere else in the poem; it's basically a line of blank verse split in two. The simplicity of the terms--"arm," "hand," "face," "love"--and the blunt echo of poetic tradition give a sense of the poem itself as a fundamental act of creation, parallel to the formation of stars or the expansion of the sun earlier but with the important distinction that this stay against chaos is a deliberate assertion of human will. (63)

Haines finishes his poem with a plethora of sound devices: repetition (*this*), consonance (*this*, *voice*, and *face*; *arm* and *my*; *voice* and *love*), assonance (the *uh* sound in *love*, similar to *come* and *dust* from the previous stanza), pronounced pronoun usage (*my* and *your*), and basic human attributes (*arm*, *hand*, *voice*, *face*). All of these preface the final word, *love*. Due to the liquid *l*, assonance, and

the vocal v, the fluidity in this last word strengthens the poem. With its resonance, as well as meaning, love ties all six stanzas together; one's attention initially dwells on the produced sounds in love but soon diverts toward love's connotative and denotative meanings, which permeate the poem. The journey from "dying stars," to "radiant fields," and back again to "cold and fleeing dust," is a circular one. Birth, life, and death--a linear model to many--seems actually more circular, in which a re-birth occurs. Haines alludes to this premise, and even though he compares stars and human existence, his ultimate realization is that love is a human attribute subject to the chaos of good and evil. Much like cosmic particles, love is difficult to see but "fiery and faithful to the end."

Throughout this section numerous poems have been discussed in the context of their sound and meaning relationships. Haines uses sound to strengthen his thematic points, and he thus achieves a desired rhythm and texture in his poetry. Consequently, as Haines says, they force the reader "to stumble on and be bruised." In the following section we will continue to stumble on Haines's sound devices, but instead of examining a variety of nature topics there will only be one constant theme throughout the next section: death.

III. Death Sounds in Haines's Poetry

In part two of this paper, Haines's sound device usage was closely examined in relation to how sounds contribute to the overall effect in various poems. Some of the poems discussed represent different aspects of the Alaskan wilderness that Haines was just beginning to know. "If the Owl Calls Again" represents the animal, "Fairbanks Under the Solstice" the Arctic cold and death, and "The Way We Live" the solitary individual. In addition to the numerous sound devices, Haines intertwines many motifs throughout his poetry. He mainly explores subjects that constitute life experiences in the Alaskan interior: harsh Alaskan weather, life as a solitary individual, animals, hunting, trapping, and most noticeably--death.

Death as a Motif

Death is one of Haines's favorite motifs. For example, in *Winter News* one-third of the poems have references to death. In the title poem "Winter News," Haines writes "the voice of the snowman / calls the white- / haired children home" (12-14). This poem brings to mind Wallace Stevens's "The Snow Man," a poem also about winter's duality. At first glance, winter, and its whiteness, represents a childhood innocence and a certain purity. A closer look

shows us another winter layer--a cold, brutal, yet inviting reality. "The Dream of February" (WN) begins with hunting imagery but ends with a surreal, dreamlike image that mentions a mist "that / enveloped the world" (41-42).

Similarly, Haines details death in "Snowy Night," (WN) a short poem reminiscent of Stevens's "The Snow Man;" however, the ending diverges into the surreal world, an aspect Haines often explores in his poetry:

Snowy Night

This is like a place
we used to know,
but stranger
and filled with the cold
imagination of a frozen
sea, in which
the moon is anchored
like a ghost
in heavy chains.

Don Bogen, in "Faithful to the End: John Haines's Poetry Since 1980," makes a valid point that can be applied to Haines's earlier poetry. Bogen states, "like other Romantics, Haines is energized by death" (69). Much like Walt Whitman, and in some respect Edgar Allen Poe, Haines incorporates death into his poetry. Death energizes Haines, as is the case throughout *Winter News*; Haines confronts death directly and this results in some hard-edged poetry at times. Some of his most effective poems concern the death of animals. Interestingly enough, Haines doesn't just stay on the surface in his animal/death poems; rather than only

describe a situation he forces his way inside and examines the connections between man, animal, and death.

For example, in "The Moosehead" and "On the Divide," both from *Winter News*, Haines focuses on an animal's death in the beginning but gradually moves toward his own contemplation of human mortality. In these two poems, Haines ends with a surprise, one that leaves the reader on a different path than the original one; each poem's last stanza forces one to ponder the outcome as I will shortly illustrate. Haines achieves this feat without neglecting sound devices, which strengthens his overall message.

A Ship That Slowly Sinks

In "The Moosehead," one of Haines's best metaphoric poems, each stanza takes the reader one step closer towards Haines's ultimate destination--a unique image that speaks to the reader. These steps, wrought by metaphor and irony, also contain many sound devices that Haines frequently uses in his poetry:

The Moosehead

Stripped of its horns and skin,
the moosehead is sinking.

The eyes have fallen back
from their ports into the sleepy,
green marrow of Death.

Over the bridge of the nostrils,
the small pilots of the soil
climb and descend.

In the cabin of the skull,
 where the brain once floated
 like a ruddy captain,
 there is just this black water
 and a faint glowing of phosphorus.

Even though stanza one literally sets the scene for the reader, alliteration and cadence abound, as previously shown in the poem "Fairbanks Under the Solstice." Haines dictates pace in "The Moosehead," and by using alliteration he forces his first stanza, a short two-lined one, to take longer than it actually should. The aspirate s present in *stripped*, *skin*, and *sinking* establishes a slow cadence; moreover, the s sound repeats itself in *its* and *moosehead*. Haines's slow cadence benefits from the z sound in *horns* and *is*. There is little chance of making it through this stanza quickly. With the combination of the serpent-hissing sounds that evoke death, and the vivid details, Haines's initial image is succinct and powerful. This stanza, for several reasons aside from its alliteration and cadence, depicts death. First, the moosehead, much like a sinking ship, will soon be enveloped. Second, the moosehead is food for nature, much like a ship's crew would be at first. Death has occurred. The moosehead has been stripped of its horns and skin, but such an image conflicts with the sinking-ship image that Haines uses wherein death is eminent. Even though the moose is dead, the decaying moosehead still foreshadows death, just as a sinking ship does. The sinking moosehead seems to

speak about death as it sinks, with its slow decay and "pilot" activity. In this manner, as Kevin Bezner argues in his article "The Cry of a Rock: On the Location of Mind in the Poetry of John Haines," Haines makes the moose a messenger of death (104). As in Dante's *Inferno*, the entrance into the underworld is by way of boat, only this time Charon, Dante's guide, isn't present. The voice in the poem is alone, on the outside looking in, at the journey toward death. The moosehead certainly brings death closer; however, as I will show, the moosehead represents much more to Haines.

The moosehead, as an object, rather intrigues Haines. The moosehead acts as a tool in which he can examine death and learn from his observations. What was previously a great and powerful moose has now been consumed by death. Haines lingers on this main point throughout the entire poem, and he does so with a slow and rocking cadence that stresses specific words and images. In the poem's remaining stanzas Haines sees a moosehead that manifests death, but ultimately he discovers something unexpected--a moosehead that manifests life.

"The eyes have fallen back," as Haines slowly stretches out his description in stanza two. In contrast to stanza one Haines uses assonance as his primary sound device, and this is evident three times. First, the *uh* sound in the

(two instances) repeats in *from* and *of*. Second, in line one the short vowel *a* in *have* repeats in *back*. The third instance occurs with the repeated *e* sound in *sleepy* and *green*. All three examples strengthen the symbolic imagery because they add rhythm and sound emphasis to the poem's situation. Haines's slow cadence mimics this scenario in which death eases its way into the moosehead; yet, the decomposition process takes a shift toward the surreal as Haines's literal description begins to diverge into the metaphorical realm-- the eyes are now in the midst of the "sleepy, / green marrow of Death" (4-5). Each eye represents a ship just as the moosehead itself represents a ship. The eyes have fallen into their own sea, a sea composed of the "green marrow of Death." Haines's metaphorical imagery till now, especially the moose representing a ship of death, works well in the confines of his wilderness locale and within the scope of *Winter News* because death in the cold, Alaskan wilderness is indeed harsh. The moosehead has been literally, figuratively, and poetically "stripped of its horns and skin" and becomes a ship that slowly sinks. Its eyes have left their ports for their ultimate resting place--the Alaskan wilderness, where death is a daily occurrence.

Haines continues his ship imagery in stanza three, but he does this without overemphasizing sound. What little

evidence exists pertaining to sound devices is overshadowed by the thematic elements present. Regarding the few sound devices--Haines repeats *the* four times, and he uses the passive voice twice, as evident in the first two stanza lines when he repeats *of the*. These sounds exhibit redundancy and do not strengthen the stanza. As in the next stanza, this one contains plenty of liquid *l* sounds--
nostrlls, smlll, pillots, soll, and climb. These sounds help build a cohesive stanza, and they echo the sounds emanated from the word *the*, insomuch as they move the stanza forward rhythmically. The *l* sounds simulate movement, much like the maggots' movement. Thematically, Haines shows how the insect world has further taken control now. The moosehead (ship) has lost its nostrils (bridge) to the creatures (small pilots) in the soil. Haines chooses "pilots" which works because pilots, in a sense, take or lead one to a particular destination. In this scenario the pilots are leading the readers to death and, ultimately, to a discovery. Here, Haines's subtle irony is fascinating, because in a literal sense, there is life *in* death, in this instance directly in the midst. On one level these pilots are hard at work, but on another level they are hard at play, which only further illustrates the situation's irony. At this point in the poem Haines shifts his focus from death to life, a shift even more prevalent in the next stanza.

The final stanza culminates in the results that the previous three stanzas presented. First, Haines's primary subject, the brain, is very appropriate. Haines logically progresses by moving from the eyes to the brain. While the eyes are said to be the pathway to the soul, the brain is essentially the pathway to thought and action. Haines writes that the brain (captain) once floated in the skull (cabin), which is now filled with black water. Just as the eyes have fallen into the "green marrow of Death," the brain too has fallen. Where it once was, is now just black water. Haines knows something else remains, and this becomes apparent in the penultimate and final lines. These two lines further show why this stanza is the poem's culmination. Ironically, Haines includes the word *just* in "there is just this black water / and a faint glowing of phosphorus," as if those two elements are insignificant. Phosphorus, a constituent of all plants and animals, is crucial to life, yet this element can also be extremely poisonous in certain conditions. Haines shows his readers the situation's duality. Once more, in the moosehead life exists in death, and even though the brain no longer visibly exists, life still occurs in its place. Lastly, Haines uses sound devices extensively in this stanza. The vowel sound *uh* proliferates again, eleven times in all--in *the* (three times), *of* (twice), *a* (twice), *skull*, *once*, *ruddy*, and *just*.

Haines incorporates near rhyme with *cabin* and *captain*, both of which have the short vowel sound *i*, also heard in *is* and *this*. Another near rhyme example is *where* and *there*. The liquid *l* sound, so prevalent in the previous stanza, also appears in this one: *skull*, *floated*, *like*, *black*, and *glowing*. Repeated sounds such as these combine with each other, along with the poem in its entirety, and therefore result in an overall sense of unity and sound texture.

In "The Moosehead," Haines not only depicts what death is like, but ironically he depicts what life is like. He accomplishes this by examining a place where most people would see only death, assuming they would look at all. A similar examination is also evident in "Thaw" (WN); in this poem, which is full of alliteration and assonance, Haines writes "This wind is like water / pouring through the passes, / bringing a smell of the south / and the drowned, weedy coast, / a place we've never seen (1-5). Haines then mentions the "reports of gales and wrecked barges" and the death of three men. The search for the last one to die is suspended, while "the lonely survivor / who crawls exhausted above / the clutch of the tide, / his hands outstretched to the moon / which sails slowly by (10-14). Up until this point Haines focuses on death, but he ends his poem detailing life in the midst of death:

This water floods over us
 and surges far to the west,
 to be lost in the frozen
 plains of the hunters,
 who awaken and listen in darkness,
 guarding a smoky candle
 against the silent
 and relentless cold. (15-22)

In both poems Haines shows the scariness that death in the Alaskan landscape evokes, but he willingly goes one step further and stares a little longer until he sees everything else present. Haines thus achieves success both thematically and technically, and he continues this pattern in the following death poem, "On the Divide."

A Shadow Rises

One notable point in "On the Divide," is the poem's subject of silence--the silence of death. As discussed in the previous section, death often appears as a silent figure in Haines's poems. Whether it is the silence of observing a decaying moosehead in "The Moosehead" or the "silent / and relentless cold" that is portrayed as wind in "Thaw," Haines illustrates how death speaks through silence. In the following poem Haines once again uses the death of animals as a platform for his writing:

On the Divide

I am haunted by
 the deaths of animals.

Their frozen, moonlit eyes
 stare into the hollow
 of my skull; they listen

as though I had
something to tell them.

But a shadow rises
at the edge of my dream--

No one speaks;

and afterwhile the cold,
red mantle of dawn
sweeps over our bodies.

Haines implies that two distinct "worlds"--the animal and the human--exist. If one combines the two they actually become a hunter's world, with the animal and human as hunters. What Haines focuses on is the human reaction to the hunting ordeal. In "Death and Dreams in John Haines's *Winter News*," Carolyn J. Allen states that in "On the Divide," and other similar poems, such as "The Sound of Animals in the Night," the hunters are affected by what they have done: "The hunters remember those they have killed; the memory of the damage they have brought stays with them" (31). Prior to the hunter killing its prey in "On the Divide," there seems to be a division; nevertheless, once the animal is killed, as Haines writes, the separation between hunter and prey no longer exists. Death negates this separation, particularly the shadow that brings silence in stanzas three and four; yet, the beginning lines set the poem's overall tone.

"I am haunted by / the deaths of animals" Haines writes in stanza one (1-2). Similar to "The Moosehead" there is

silence in death, only this time Haines writes a first-person account rather than just a poetic description. The word "haunted" denotes that this experience happens often to the hunter inasmuch as he speaks of the "deaths of animals." One might argue that "haunted," in punlike fashion, could stand for "hunted," as in "I am *hunted* by the deaths of animals." The speaker cannot escape what happens when animals are killed by his own hand. He is both the hunter and the prey in this poem. Even though Haines focuses on death and silence as themes, and the impact each has on the hunter, a major emphasis on sound still results. The examples abound, beginning in stanza one. Here, Haines begins with a rhyme pattern that recurs throughout the poem. As previously mentioned, Haines doesn't usually incorporate a lot of rhyme or near rhyme into his poetry, but the first word *I* rhymes, or closely rhymes, with the following words scattered throughout the poem: *by*, *eyes*, *my* (twice), *I*, *rises*, and *afterwhile*. Two other major sound devices present themselves: the assonance in *am* and *animals*, and the consonance in *the* and *deaths*. Both devices become more obvious in the next stanza, the largest by far--seven lines; however, the central death theme still prevails.

We then learn why the speaker is haunted by the deaths of animals. Darkness has fallen and the animals' "frozen, moonlight eyes / stare into the hollow / of my skull," and

the animals listen (3-5). In a reversal of "The Moosehead," Haines now becomes the death head himself. The first line's rhythm in stanza two mostly results from the stress pattern--three iambic feet--and also because Haines appropriately breaks the line at eyes. Because of its placement, he forces one to draw out the sound--eyezzz. This word truly draws attention to the image being described. The speaker has nothing to tell the animals and seems resentful about being expected to say something, yet the stanza's sound devices do say something: alliteration, consonance, assonance, rhyme, and repetition abound everywhere. The *th* in *Their* repeats in *the*, *they*, *though*, and *them*. The liquids *l*, *m*, and *n* are numerous: *frozen*, *moonlight*, *into*, *hollow*, *my*, *skull*, *listen*, *something*, *tell*, and *them*. In the previous stanza, Haines scatters rhyme throughout, and some of those rhyming words crop up in this stanza (*eyes*, *my*, and *I*). Also, throughout the poem Haines uses the aspirate *s* nine times, four of those in this stanza alone: *stare*, *skull*, *listen*, and *something*. Finally, contrasting the aspirate *s* is the mute *t*, which recurs five times in this stanza: *moonlit*, *stare*, *into*, *to*, and *tell*. Overall, numerous sounds repeat themselves in stanza two, and many emerge in the remaining three stanzas as well.

Haines often uses a word and line break to draw attention to an image, and he does this with the line "But a shadow rises" in stanza three. One cannot help but linger on *rises*, and the shadow image does indeed rise. Haines implements two important sound devices in near rhyme and alliteration: near rhyme--*rises* and *my*, and *shadow* with *hollow* (from stanza two); alliteration--*my* and *dream*. The mute *t*, from previous stanzas, also shows up here too: the mute *t* in *But* and *at*. This shadow silence continues with "No one speaks" in stanza four, a one-line stanza. Alliteration occurs in this sentence: the *n* in *no* and *one*, and the *s* in *speaks*. The line break after *speaks* works well due to the mute *k*'s finality, extended by the noisy aspirate *s* in *speaks*sssss.

A "new day" occurs at the end of the poem. This last stanza begins where the previous one stopped, except much time has expired. It is morning now and "the cold, / red mantle of dawn / sweeps over our bodies" for the hunter and animals (11-13). The death imagery continues, but now Haines refers to two important issues. The dichotomy of death and life remains at the poem's core, as in "The Moosehead" and "Little Cosmic Dust Poem." The "cold, / red mantle of dawn" is both death and life; as one night of death has passed, another day of life approaches. By

breaking the line at "cold," Haines utilizes the word two ways. The dark dream's coldness engulfs everything, just as the Alaskan cold does. Simultaneously, the red mantle signifies a new day, a day of light and warmth, as it "sweeps" over the bodies at dawn. Technically, by breaking the first line at *cold*, Haines once again forces the poem's cadence because the mute *d*, along with the comma, requires one to slow down; furthermore, the repetition of the liquid *l* sound in *afterwhile*, *cold*, and *mantle* in the first two lines adds sound emphasis. This particular *l* sound delivers a flowing cadence that is neither fast nor choppy. Two other sound devices provide similar effects: the alliteration of *s* in *sweeps* and the *z* sound in *bodies*, both in the poem's last line. These flowing sounds add to the stanza's poetic imagery because they unite with the red mantle's smooth sweep, therefore producing a culmination.

In summary, "On the Divide" succeeds as a poem about death and life due to the overriding silence theme, first-person narrative, succinct imagery, diction, and well-placed sound devices. If Haines were to exclude any of these the poem's death motif would not be as forceful. Consequently, because Haines uses the death motif in his poetry, and because he consciously places importance on sound, he forces his audience to examine his poetry and the noteworthy subjects: death, humanity, and life.

Death Fields

"Arlington" is a unique and ideological poem comparatively viewed with Haines's "death" poems. The poem was written in 1972, a tumultuous period in American history, and is included in *Cicada*, published in 1977. Haines combines military and hunting images, and he includes references to ancient Greece. The one-word title provides the poem's setting, and from the "small white stones" and "fields of death" to "shrapnel," "splinters of bone," and "a lamp / fueled with blood," the tone overwhelms one with a cloud of death.

Arlington

The pallor of so many
small white stones,
the metal in their names,
somber and strange
the calm of my country.

My father buried here,
and his father,
so many obedient lives.

And I too in my time
might have come,
but there is no peace
in this ground for me.

These fields of death
ask for broken columns,
a legend in pitted bronze
telling of the city
pulled into rubble here.

The soil should be thick
with shrapnel
and splinters of bone;

for a shrine, a lamp
 fueled with blood,
 if blood would burn.

One should remember that a constant sound technique used in Haines's poems is alliteration, and in stanza one Haines clearly illuminates specific words with this device. The s in so repeats itself in small, stones, somber, and strange; Haines then ends his stanza with the line: "the calm of my country." These alliteration examples unify with one another to create a web of words that highlight a specific set of images; one becomes inundated with the pallor, which crescendos towards the final stanza's bloodiness.

What stands out is how Haines describes this cemetery as a place, an unrestful place that speaks and defines; Arlington National Cemetery is more than just a burial site. Early in the poem, in stanza two, the primary reference points towards the speaker's father and grandfather buried at the cemetery. Gradually the poem has become more personal, as well as political, in nature. Line three's phrase "so many," also present in the poem's first line, stresses the sheer numbers of "obedient lives" that additionally are buried in Arlington. This cemetery indeed contains what Haines, throughout his prose, refers to as a "sense of place."

For the speaker, who admits "and I too in my time / might have come," the cemetery is not a restful place. Arlington National Cemetery, or the "fields of death" as mentioned in stanza four, is unlike ancient Greece, where the "broken columns" tell a tale "of the city / pulled into rubble." Even though the word *death* isn't actually mentioned until stanza four, there is no doubt death is the central focus till now. While the cemetery may not have the historic tale of Athens, Haines writes that there are "*fields of death*" [italics are for emphasis only and are not part of the poem]. These "fields of death" personify as they "ask for broken columns." Lines two and three, rhythmically similar, both end with the same z sound (columns and bronze). Interestingly, Haines uses the word *pulled* in the stanza's last line: "pulled into rubble here." Here again, the "fields of death" personify, and in this situation the action is much more proactive and less passive than before.

Rather than being victims of death on its terms, Haines writes in the penultimate stanza:

The soil should be thick
with shrapnel
and splinters of bone; (18-20)

"These fields of death" contain fathers, and their fathers, killed abroad instead of being wartime casualties on their own country's land. While Haines clearly refers to war in

this stanza, one cannot help but link, especially in comparison to Haines's earlier poems, words such as *soil*, *thick*, *bone*, and *blood*, to his many poems about hunting and death ("Victims," "Smoke," and "The Man Who Skins Animals"). These archetypal words appear in other later poems, as evident in "Water of Night," "In the House of Wax," and "In the Forest without Leaves" [bold type is for emphasis only and is not part of the poem]:

water into kilowatts,
soil into dust,
 and flesh into butcher cuts-- (X: 13-15)

 Nothing stains like **blood**,
 nothing whitens like snow. (XII: 10-11 "In the Forest
 without Leaves" NP)

From "Water of Night" (NP):

Full of **blood** as winter came,
 they returned to the earth
 and slept.

And so the deep changes went on:
 fingers into roots,
 and rocks from their clinging **bones**. (IV: 5-10)

.
 After the burden of **soil**
 was set aside,
 and the scouring shovels halted, (V: 1-3)

And from "In the House of Wax," published in *The Sewanne*

Review (1996):

something more than a mirror,
 less than a telling likeness;
 an ideality slick with **blood**. (33-35)

Haines, using shrine imagery, ends "Arlington" similarly, only he fills his three-line stanza with a haunting and vivid image. While most people wouldn't normally think of "a lamp / fueled with blood" as a shrine, Haines revels in this kind of striking imagery. He reiterates his point that much blood has been spilled by the soldiers killed throughout various battles. This, in addition to the repetition of *blood*, and the alliteration of *b* in the last two lines, stresses the strong belief that this cemetery is not what it should be. Ironically, the lamp, a symbol of light, is "fueled with blood," a symbol of darkness. As a result, in "Arlington" Haines journeys from light, and "the pallor of so many / small white stones," to darkness, and "a lamp / fueled with blood." This destination is where the poem's core essence reveals itself and where Haines illuminates death in a new light.

IV. Conclusions

T.S. Eliot writes that "the music of poetry is not something which exists apart from the meaning. Otherwise, we could have poetry of great musical beauty which made no sense, and I have never come across such poetry" (29). Eliot's statement summarizes what this paper has sought to illustrate. In chapter one, I detail how Haines's background in art ultimately leads him to his career as a writer. For it was his inability to successfully paint the spectacular Alaskan scenery that helped him switch to writing. Once Haines began writing he immediately realized the importance of sound in poetry, and his integration of sound into his poems is noteworthy since this important poetic aspect has not been a topic of discussion among Haines's critics. By implementing Brown's intricate discussion of letters and sounds as a foundation for an examination of Haines's poetry, my goal has been to illustrate the strong presence of sound devices and their connection with meaning in his poetry. The sum of a poem's parts should equal one cohesive poem that makes sense, and Haines doesn't sacrifice sound for meaning or vice versa.

As illustrated in chapter two, sound, or "the music of poetry," is such a vital element in Haines's work. In the poems discussed throughout this chapter, sound and meaning

work in unison to create a poetic experience. Assonance, consonance, alliteration, slant rhyme, and other sound devices blend with meaning and vividly enhance each poem. For instance, Haines's decision to use the words *rise* and *glide* in "If the Owl Calls Again" not only produces flight images but also flight sounds; the musical pattern these two words elicit simulate flying. Similarly, in "Fairbanks Under the Solstice" the assonance *s* sounds, throughout the opening stanza, elicit hissing noises reminiscent of a balloon losing its air--its essence, but in this case the day is losing its light and warmth:

Slowly, without sun, the day sinks
toward the close of December.
It is minus sixty degrees. (1-3)

In each example, sound and meaning work together as one, which results in a unifying experience for his readers.

Conversely, one might think that a recurring and powerful motif such as death might easily overshadow and set itself apart from any intentional sound inclusions, but Haines still intermixes meaning and sound in his "death" poetry. In chapter three, a selection of his poems were examined in which death is the central focal point. In Haines's poems about a decaying moosehead or a father's burial site, he leads his readers toward another gigantic truth such as love, bitterness, or irony. He is always careful in his integration of sound and meaning, as in

"Fairbanks Under the Solstice." Haines begins his death poem "The Moosehead" with a similar array of alliteration and *s* sounds:

Stripped of its horns and skin,
the moosehead is sinking. (1-2)

The serpent sounds in this stanza evoke death imagery and set the tone for the poem's remaining stanzas. In similar style is the initial alliteration and mood in "Arlington":

The pallor of so many
small white stones,
the metal in their names,
somber and strange
the calm of my country. (1-5)

The alliteration in *so*, *small*, *stones*, *somber*, and *strange* forces these words and death imagery upon the reader. These are "the calm of my country" Haines poignantly writes [note the contrasting alliteration between *calm* and *country* and the previous *s* sounds]; moreover, alliteration also hails strongly in *many*, *metal*, and *my*. In the above stanza, as he frequently does, Haines uses sound devices, irony, and occasionally sarcasm, to contrast a specific image.

Therein lies the crux in much of Haines's poetry. A look beneath the surface shows that Haines consciously combines sound and meaning. Unfortunately he has not received enough kudos for this aspect of his work; yet, in another way Haines has received his accolades. In *Winter News*--a book that was originally praised "in part because of

its depiction of a landscape unfamiliar to contemporary poetry, the Alaskan wilderness" (Bezner 3)--and subsequent books such as *The Stone Harp* and *News from the Glacier*, Haines definitely put his personal stamp on wilderness poetry. He consequently was dubbed "the Alaskan poet," a label that has stuck even though he later won awards and fellowships due to his poetry about war, traveling, and art. Critics may debate whether Haines is better at writing about one of these subjects or another; however, I would argue this debate is irrelevant because Haines's poetry, especially in the poems discussed, is technically stimulating and deliberate. This sentiment is echoed by poet and essayist Wendell Berry, who recalls the following after having heard Haines at a poetry reading:

One felt that the words had come down onto the page one at a time, like slow drops from a dripping eave, making their assured small sounds, the sounds accumulating. The poems seemed to have been made with a patience like that with which rivers freeze or lichens cover stones. Within the condition of long-accepted silence, each line had been acutely listened for, and then acutely listened to." (25)

Perhaps Berry's words best sum up Haines's poetry. Haines's deliberative writing, in combination with three key elements (silence, listening, and sound), aptly defines the tone in the poems discussed throughout this paper. If we

remember to listen closely, not only to sounds but to silence as well, while reading Haines's poetry, the poems' meanings and "musical beauty" will indeed be evident.

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