

moment and pay attention—not only to the details within the poem, but also, through them, to whatever in the world or in ourselves the poem attends to. Sometimes that's all a poem does—simply invites us to pay attention to something we wouldn't notice otherwise.

Regardless of their overall length, moreover, almost all poems concentrate our attention and modulate our pace by doling out words a few at a time, arranging them not just into sentences (as in prose), but into discreet **lines**. One result is much more blank space and thus more silences and pauses than in prose. For this reason alone, “Head, Heart” looks and works like a poem. And the deliberateness with which it does so is signaled by the fact that one of its sentences is divided so as to span multiple lines. (Line 3 ends with a colon, not a period.) By arranging words into lines and, often, into **stanzas**, the poet, not a typesetter or printer, determines where words fall on the page. And that perhaps is the most important aspect of that arrangement of language that has differentiated poetry from prose since poetry became a written, as well as spoken, art (an issue discussed further in chapter 18). All printings of a poem, if accurate, reproduce exactly the same breaks and space the words precisely the same way on the page.

AUTHORS ON THEIR CRAFT

BILLY COLLINS ON THE POET AS “LINE-MAKER” (2006)*

I'm a line-maker. I think that's what makes poets different from prose-writers. . . . We think not just in sentences the way prose writers do but also in lines. . . . When I'm constructing a poem, I'm trying to write one good line after another. . . . I'm not thinking of just writing a paragraph and then chopping it up. I'm very conscious of the fact that every line should have a cadence to it. It should contribute to the progress of the poem. And that the ending of the line is a way of turning the reader's attention back into the interior of the poem.

*“A Brisk Walk: An Interview with Billy Collins.” *Guernica* (June 2006). Web. 14 June 2011.

One result is that line endings and beginnings inevitably get more of our attention, bear more oomph and meaning. Notice how many of the lines of “Head, Heart” begin with *head* and *heart* and how these words repeat in a pattern (*Heart, Head, Head, Heart, Heart, Head*—and then *Help*), as if the line-beginnings themselves enact the same interplay between “head” and “heart” that the sentences describe. Conversely, certain end-words reverberate: *again*, for example, suggests the repetitive familiarity of this conflict, one that paradoxically seems all the more difficult or poignant because it's both repetitive (each person goes through this again and again) and familiar (all of us go through this); *then* alerts us to the temporariness of the comfort head offers heart, preparing us for the *But* in the next line.

Again and *then* also reverberate in us and with each other because they **rhyme**, just as *head*, *heart*, and *help* **alliterate**. These words share a special aural, as well as spatial and visual, relationship to each other. Though prose writers certainly