

PATTERNING by RHYTHM

Timing is controlled in a series and sequence by orchestrated movement. Rhythmic possibilities in the single picture are little more than embellishment. In series and sequence, rhythm is indispensable.

Nature, music, and poetry can influence the exploration of rhythm in pictures. A 1:1 translation of structure from one medium to another is irrelevant and impossible. I do not try to make poetic equivalents. What is important is to have a spring board not a rule book.

Placing text on one side of the two-page spread, and a picture on the facing page sets up a pattern:



This is an unimaginative solution of graphic layout which denies rhythmic concerns. There is a beat—1 · 2, 1 · 2, 1 · 2, but no music.

Pairing pictures is the most obvious use of context as referral. It does not make use of rhythm:

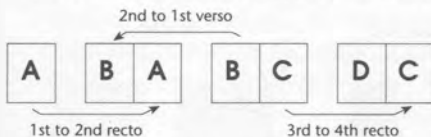


If I transpose this series by one page to the right,



pairing each recto with its verso around the foredge, instead of across the gutter, I make the viewer more conscious of turning the page, but I still have sets of pairs.

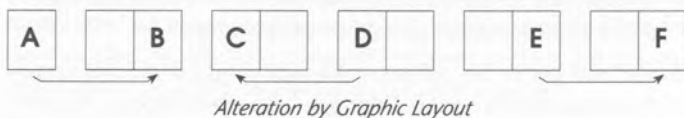
Here, the first two rectos, their versos, and the last two rectos are paired:



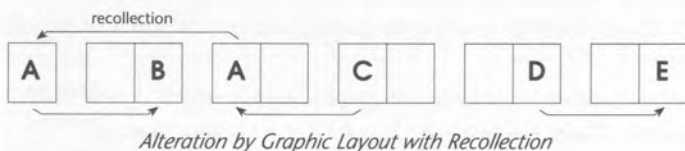
Contextual Alternation

This switches the emphasis from the right to the left, then back to the right in three successive two-page spreads. The alternation of dominance from one side of a two-page spread to the other varies the pacing, creating rhythm. This is *contextual alternation*.

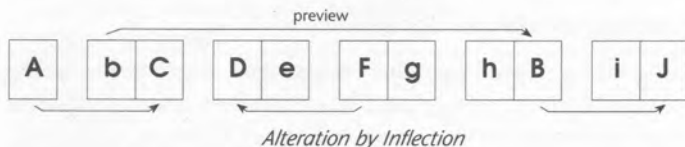
This same pattern can be achieved with alteration by graphic layout using blank pages for accent/pause: KEITH SMITH
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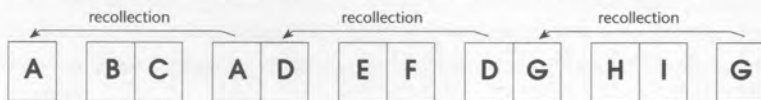
I could maintain this same alternation and compound it by referral, in this instance, using recollection:



This pattern of alternation can be achieved by inflection, using dominant and subordinate pictures. (Represented here by upper and lower case letters). The addition of preview compounds the movement in this series:



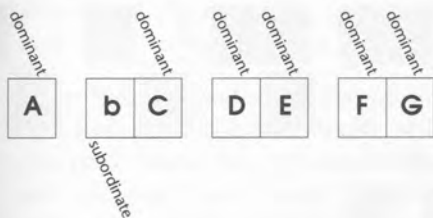
Eye movement makes alternation a physical transition. A series can be structured with multiple recollections as alternation. The steady linkage-forward is opposed, or alternated with the rhythmical recollections:



Rhythm, in a series or sequence, can be created by alternation using context, graphic layout, and/or inflection. Any of these three can be used in a series with words or pictures to create rhythm. This is narrational alternation. The plot switches back and forth in person, event, or time using context, layout, and/or inflection.

Dominant with subordinate pictures allow rhythm. Using only dominant pictures severely limits possibilities of rhythm to alternation by context or graphic layout. The majority of possibilities of patterning are by accent/pause, dominant and subordinate pictures. I see this closely related to prosody.

The effect of dominance is directly diminished by repetition:



This is why I say that if you have a book of equally strong pictures, each of which can be hung in an exhibit, you have exciting pictures, but a boring book, because pacing would be monotonous.

The illustration above could be coded visually as this:



Employing subordinate pictures along with the dominant allows the possibilities to orchestrate, to build to climaxes, to pattern with rhythm as a means to create movement and to emphasize. Equally strong pictures deny rhythm:



I can use prosody as one means of patterning. After a succession of four equally strong pictures, the following two two-page spreads provide relief with two iambic meters before returning to the heavy constant emphasis:



Musically, I could read this patterning as not only a change in rhythm, but in pitch :



Spondaic monometer would be coded as this:

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In meter, spondees never form the basis of a rhythm, but are introduced for variety, such as this iambic trimeter, followed by spondaic dimeter, returning to the pattern of iambic meters:

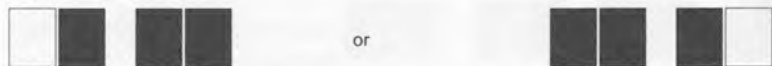


The following suggests a change in pattern by the final two-page spread. The ending is abrupt, but decisive. Rhythmically, it is the final eight notes of Beethoven's 9th Symphony:



VARIATIONS on THREE: The last seven illustrations have not used the coding of letters to suggest a variety of interaction. It has been limited to an either/or situation of dominant or subordinate (accent/pause). Now I will narrow the possibilities even more by limiting the number of pictures in each illustration to three. Further, the three will be set in an identical order of viewing. By the addition of only blank pages, I will show the permutations. As a means of patterning, one solution is to vary the image and/or page size. The other is to standardize it. The former is a problem in graphic layout, the latter is rhythm.

These two show the most obvious placement, pausing either before starting, or, at the end :



This places emphasis on the first picture, perhaps a statement of theme, a beginning:



In the following, the blank page is a pause before a conclusion, like a stinger at the end of a march by John Philip Sousa. Here, the third picture could be a summation, ending on an up-beat, perhaps to be expanded in the following chapter:



Now, things are expanding:



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This is not just an elongation of leaf flow, but a systematic patterning of rhythm. This happens to be iambic trimeter. This patterning allows changes in pacing, movement, space, mood. Patterning allows structural possibilities. The mood is up beat, positive, active. Whereas the mood in these trochaic meters is a little less forward:



The viewer senses these differing rhythmical moods, whether or not they are consciously aware of structure between pictures. If the bookmaker is oblivious to orchestration, arbitrary rhythmical moods may well conflict with the mood within the imagery.

Rhythm communicates.

For the first time, these Variations on Three break from the pattern of sets of twos on facing pages with these three anapestic meters:



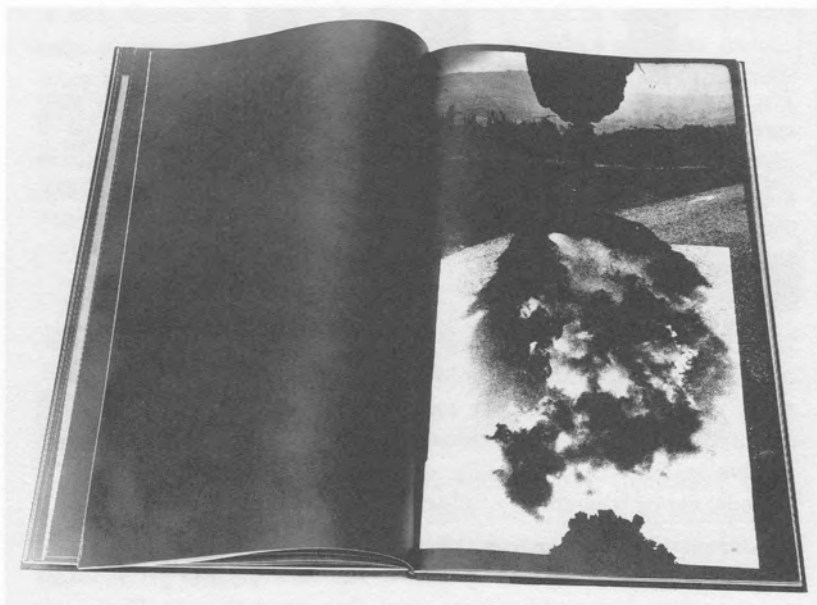
The bookmaker must always contend with the composition of two-page spreads, but to limit patterning to facing pages hardly makes use of rhythm. The two-page spread diminishes in prominence as composition goes *beyond* facing pages to other possible increments. Like the anapestic, these dactylic meters pattern in sets of three:



If the blank pages in the last seven illustrations were changed to subordinate pictures, the various patterns of rhythm would remain unchanged, while the addition of the new subordinate pictures would allow more activity. Each series or sequence can have levels of interplay. The means of rhythm are inflection, omission, referral, graphic layout. In the use of prosody, rhyme is another possible exploration, with or without meter.

Rhythm can reinforce imagery when the two are in harmony. When the moods of each are purposefully used in contradiction, the result subtly suggests there is something awry, more than meets the eye. This is one way the bookmaker can speak between the pictures.

If I am to use a format that exists in time, I must make use of rhythm. So I search the environment, music, other arts, landscape. I search industry under the microscope, the office copier, for technology. I must search experimentally for rhythms, for patterns. Patterning exists on broader terms than prosody, which I used as my previous illustrations.



John Wood, *Exxon Valdez Book I*, 1990. Quarterbound in book cloth. Twenty-four double spread silver prints, five of which are reproduced on pages 150 through 152. 51 x 30.5 cm.