

When the
was of
When,
was the of the
on the;
was the, my as an,
my like a,
my,
was the that the.
the, the of the.
the, the
with and.
was the of the,
the of on the.
there's, nor would to
this, this this
to and a.
, there.
that, at the,
the that, that its, that
like a.

Program Notes

This system that I have used in order to further understand Mary Oliver's poem has revealed to me patterns within patterns.

There are patterns made within the conjunctive word layer which is a layer below the other layers that we tend to pay the most attention to (sensibly so).

The way that the tone morphs through the poem can be seen by distilling it to its connector words. By taking out the content, the intention behind the content or the intonation of the content is explained/revealed.

I am also curious as to how many political exigencies reside within the driest words like "and". Are there gendered ways of thinking within "and"? The connotations of words that cause us to hyper analyze the way we use them -- do these apply to conjunctive words?

“Life Story” by Mary Oliver

When I lived under the black oaks

I felt I was made of leaves.

When I lived by Little Sister Pond,

I dreamed I was the feather of the blue heron

left on the shore.

I was the pond lily, my root delicate as an artery,

my face like a star,

my happiness brimming.

Later I was the footsteps that follow the sea.

I knew the tides, I knew the ingredients of the wrack.

I knew the eider, the red-throated loon

with his uplifted beak and his smart eye.

I felt I was the tip of the wave,

the pearl of water on the eider's glossy back.

No, there's no escaping, nor would I want to escape

this outgo, this foot-loosening, this solution

to gravity and a single shape.

Now I am here, later I will be there.

I will be that small cloud, staring down at the water,

the one that stalls, that lifts its white legs, that

looks like a lamb.

I only use the connector words (listed below) and the punctuation marks of each line in “Life Story” by Mary Oliver :

1 When the

2 was of.

3 When,

4 was the of the

5 on the;

6 was the, my as an,

7 my like a,

8 my,

9 was the that the.

10 the, the of the.

11 the, the

12 with and.

13 was the of the,

14 the of on the.

15 there's, nor would to

16 this, this this

17 to and a.

18 , there.

19 that, at the,

20 the that, that its, that

21 like a.