UNIVERSITÀ DI PISA
FILOLOGIA, LETTERATURA E LINGUISTICA

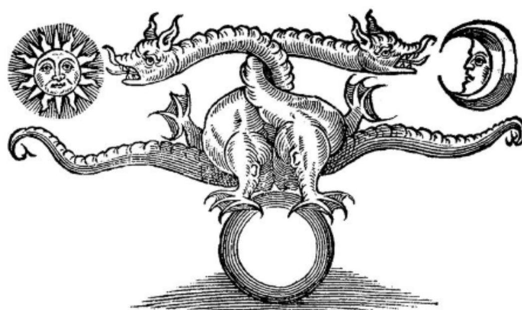
CdS Lingue e Letterature Straniere
Letteratura inglese II (Curriculum "C") – 9 CFU - a.a. 2018-19

Simona Beccone

Contatti: simona.beccone@unipi.it; https://people.unipi.it/simona_beccone/

ALCHIMIA, MAGIA E OCCULTISMO NELLA LETTERATURA INGLESE, DALLE ORIGINI AL SECOLO XVII (PARTE ISTITUZIONALE)

Dispensa dei testi primari
Dispensa di analisi del testo poetico



Sir Thomas Wyatt, "Whoso list to hunt…" (1577)

1. Whoso list to hunt, I know where is an hind,
2. But as for me, *hélas*, I may no more.
3. The vain travail hath wearied me so sore,
4. I am of them that farthest cometh behind.
5. Yet may I by no means my wearied mind
6. Draw from the deer, but as she fleeth afore
7. Fainting I follow. I leave off therefore,
8. Sithens in a net I seek to hold the wind.
9. Who list her hunt, I put him out of doubt,
10. As well as I may spend his time in vain.
11. And graven with diamonds in letters plain
12. There is written, her fair neck round about:
13. *Noli me tangere*, for Caesar's I am,
14. And wild for to hold, though I seem tame.

William Shakespeare, *Sonnets* (1609)

12

1. When I do count the clock that tells the time,
2. And see the brave day sunk in hideous night;
3. When I behold the violet past prime,
4. And sable curls all silver'd o'er with white;
5. When lofty trees I see barren of leaves
6. Which erst from heat did canopy the herd,
7. And summer's green all girded up in sheaves
8. Borne on the bier with white and bristly beard,
9. Then of thy beauty do I question make,
10. That thou among the wastes of time must go,
11. Since sweets and beauties do themselves forsake
12. And die as fast as they see others grow;
13. And nothing 'gainst Time's scythe can make defence
14. Save breed, to brave him when he takes thee hence.

15

1. When I consider everything that grows
2. Holds in perfection but a little moment,
3. That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows
4. Whereon the stars in secret influence comment;
5. When I perceive that men as plants increase,
6. Cheered and check'd even by the selfsame sky,
7. Vaunt in their youthful sap, at height decrease,
8. And wear their brave state out of memory;
9. Then the conceit of this inconstant stay
10. Sets you most rich in youth before my sight,
11. Where wasteful Time debateth with Decay
12. To change your day of youth to sullied night;
13. And all in war with Time for love of you,
14. As he takes from you, I engraft you new.

30

1. When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
2. I summon up remembrance of things past,
3. I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
4. And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:
5. Then can I drown an eye, unus'd to flow,
6. For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,
7. And weep afresh love's long since cancell'd woe,
8. And moan th' expense of many a vanish'd sight;
9. Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,
10. And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er
11. The sad account of fore-bemoaned moan,
12. Which I new pay as if not paid before.
13. But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,
14. All losses are restor'd, and sorrows end.

130

1. My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
2. Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
3. If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
4. If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
5. I have seen roses damasked, red and white,
6. But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
7. And in some perfumes is there more delight
8. Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
9. I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
10. That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
11. I grant I never saw a goddess go;
12. My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground.
13. And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
14. As any she belied with false compare.

John Donne, "Batter my heart…" (1633)

1. Batter my heart, three-person'd God, for you
2. As yet but knock, breathe, shine, and seek to mend;
3. That I may rise and stand, o'erthrow me, and bend
4. Your force to break, blow, burn, and make me new.
5. I, like an usurp'd town to another due,
6. Labor to admit you, but oh, to no end;
7. Reason, your viceroy in me, me should defend,
8. But is captiv'd, and proves weak or untrue.
9. Yet dearly I love you, and would be lov'd fain,
10. But am betroth'd unto your enemy;
11. Divorce me, untie or break that knot again,
12. Take me to you, imprison me, for I,
13. Except you enthrall me, never shall be free,
14. Nor ever chaste, except you ravish me.

John Donne, "The Sun Rising" (1633)

Busy old fool, unruly sun,
Why dost thou thus,
Through windows, and through curtains call on us?
Must to thy motions lovers' seasons run?
Saucy pedantic wretch, go chide
Late school boys and sour prentices,
Go tell court huntsmen that the king will ride,
Call country ants to harvest offices,
Love, all alike, no season knows nor clime,
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.

Thy beams, so reverend and strong
Why shouldst thou think?

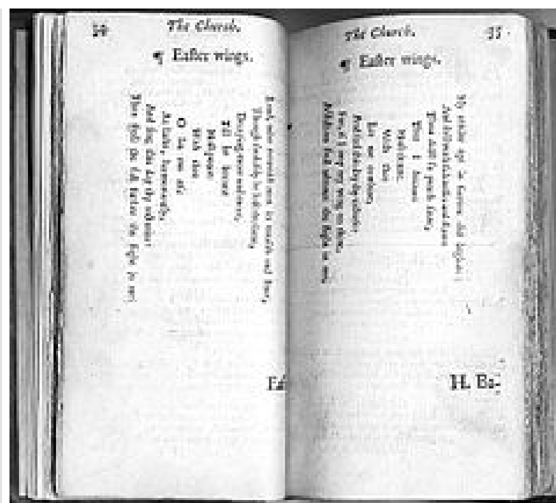
I could eclipse and cloud them with a wink,
But that I would not lose her sight so long;
If her eyes have not blinded thine,
Look, and tomorrow late, tell me,
Whether both th' Indias of spice and mine
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.
Ask for those kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,
And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.

She's all states, and all princes, I,
Nothing else is.
Princes do but play us; compared to this,
All honor's mimic, all wealth alchemy.
Thou, sun, art half as happy as we,
In that the world's contracted thus.
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.
Shine here to us, and thou art everywhere;
This bed thy center is, these walls, thy sphere.

George Herbert, “Easter Wings” (1633)

Lord, who createdst man in wealth and store,
Though foolishly he lost the same,
Decaying more and more,
Till he became
Most poore:
With thee
O let me rise
As larks, harmoniously,
And sing this day thy victories:
Then shall the fall further the flight in me.

My tender age in sorrow did beginne
And still with sicknesses and shame.
Thou didst so punish sinne,
That I became
Most thinne.
With thee
Let me combine,
And feel thy victorie:
For, if I imp my wing on thine,
Affliction shall advance the flight in me.


The Church.
Easter wings.
The Church.
Easter wings.
H. Ba:

George Herbert, "The Altar" (1633)

The Altar

A broken ALTAR, Lord thy servant rears,
Made of a heart, and cemented with teares:
Whose parts are as thy hand did frame;
No workmans tool hath touch'd the same
A HEART alone
Is such a stone,
As nothing but
Thy pow'r doth cut.
Wherefore each part
Of my hard heart
Meets in this frame,
To praise thy Name:
That if I chance to hold my peace,
These stones to praise thee may not cease.
O let thy blessed SACRIFICE be mine,
And sanctifie this ALTAR to be thine.

George Herbert, "Hope"

I gave to Hope a watch of mine: but he
An anchor gave to me.
Then an old prayer-book I did present:
And he an optick sent.
With that I have a viall full of tears:
But he a few green eares.
Ah Loyterer! I'le no more, no more I'le bring:
I did expect a ring!

John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667), Book I, ll. 1-26

1. Of mans first disobedience, and the fruit
2. Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste
3. Brought death into the world, and all our woe,
4. With loss of Eden, till one greater Man
5. Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,
6. Sing heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top
7. Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire
8. That shepherd, who first taught the chosen seed,
9. In the beginning how the Heav'ns and Earth
10. Rose out of Chaos: or if Sion hill
11. Delight thee more, and Siloa's brook that flow'd
12. Fast by the oracle of God; I thence
13. Invoke thy aid to my adventrous song,
14. That with no middle flight intends to soar
15. Above th' Aonian mount, while it pursues
16. Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

17. And chiefly thou, O Spirit, that dost prefer
18. Before all temples th' upright heart and pure,
19. Instruct me, for thou know'st; thou from the first
20. Wast present, and with mighty wings outspread
21. Dove-like satst brooding on the vast abyss
22. And mad'st it pregnant: what in me is dark
23. Illumine, what is low raise and support;
24. That to the highth of this great argument
25. I may assert Eternal Providence,
26. And justifie the wayes of God to men.

John Milton, *Paradise Lost* (1667), Book I, ll. 242-270

1. ‘Is this the region, this the soil, the clime,’
2. Said then the lost archangel, ‘this the seat
3. That we must change for Heaven, this mournful gloom
4. For that celestial light? Be it so, since he
5. Who now is sovereign can dispose and bid
6. What shall be right: furthest from him is best
7. Whom reason hath equalled, force hath made supreme
8. Above his equals. Farewell happy fields
9. Where joy for ever dwells: hail horrors, hail
10. Infernal world, and thou profoundest hell
11. Receive thy new possessor: one who brings
12. A mind not to be changed by place or time.
13. The mind is its own place, and in itself
14. Can make a heaven of Hell, a Hell of Heaven.
15. What matter where, if I be still the same,
16. And what I should be, all but less than he
17. Whom thunder hath made greater? Here at least
18. We shall be free; the almighty hath not built
19. Here for his envy, will not drive us hence:
20. Here we may reign secure, and in my choice
21. To reign is worth ambition though in Hell:
22. Better to reign in Hell, than serve in Heaven.
23. But wherefore let we then our faithful friends,
24. The associates and copartners of our loss
25. Lie thus astonished on the oblivious pool,
26. And call them not to share with us their part
27. In this unhappy mansion, or once more
28. With rallied arms to try what may be yet
29. Regained in Heaven, or what more lost in Hell?’

FONDAMENTI DI ANALISI DEL TESTO POETICO

FONDAMENTI DI ANALISI DEL TESTO POETICO

Secondo Lotman (Lotman 1977, pp. 7- 23, 69-72) il testo artistico è una struttura di grande complessità, che fa un uso altamente specializzato della forma linguistica e dei suoi segni per trasmettere un volume di informazione che non sarebbe possibile trasmettere con altri mezzi:

- Sistema di modellizzazione secondario ("Art is a secondary modeling system", Lotman 1977, p. 9)
- Interdipendenza strutturale, inscindibilità di contenuti da forme (Lotman 1977, pp. 10-12)
- Testo come ipersegno (Lotman 1977, pp. 19-23)
- Ripetizione/deviazione; automatizzazione/deautomatizzazione (Lotman 1977, pp. 69-72)
- Semantizzazione degli elementi non semantici ("semantization of the extra-semantic […] elements of natural language", Lotman 1977, p. 21)

In poesia, l'orchestrazione fonico-ritmica del verso organizza in maniera del tutto peculiare gli elementi costitutivi del significante, i quali non soltanto trasmettono un volume di informazione al pari di tutti gli altri livelli (*e.g.* sintattico, semantico) ma rappresentano anche, più di altri, lo specifico della comunicazione poetica.

I PRINCIPALI LIVELLI DI ANALISI DEL TESTO POETICO

1. Fonologico
2. Metrico-prosodico
3. Lessicale (~ *diction*)
4. Sintattico (~ paratassi e ipotassi)
5. Semantico (temi, motivi, isotopie)
6. Retorico-tropico
7. Elementi paratestuali e grafemici
8. I codici culturali e l'intertestualità

PARTE I: LO STRATO FONOLOGICO

I.1. Ricorsività e deviazione, automatizzazione e deautomatizzazione nel testo poetico: le ripetizioni foniche e la ricostruzione delle ISOTOPIE

TESTO 1: W.B. Yeats, "Sailing to Byzantium", ll. 13-14
(addensarsi improvviso della fricativa alveolare sorda [s])

Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence

I.2. Alcune ripetizioni foniche codificate e le loro funzioni: rima (rhyme), allitterazione (alliteration), consonanza (consonance), assonanza (assonance)

TESTO 2: W. Wordsworth, "The Solitary Reaper", ll. 5-8

I listened, motionless and still;
And as I mounted up the hill,
The music in my heart I bore,
Long after it was heard no more

TESTO 3: W. Shakespeare, Sonnet 30, ll. 1-4

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste […]

TESTO 4: W.H. Auden, "O Where Are You Going?", ll. 13-16

"Out of this house," said rider to reader,
"Yours never will," said farer to fearer,
"They're looking for you," said hearer to horror,
As he left them there, as he left them there.

TESTO 5: J. Keats, "Ode on a Grecian Urn", ll. 1-2

Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of silence and slow time

I.3. Il rapporto significante-significato in poesia come problema semantico

È evidente che nessun suono del testo poetico, isolatamente preso, ha un significato autonomo. La significanza del suono in poesia non deriva dalla sua particolare natura, ma viene supposta deduttivamente. L'apparato delle ripetizioni isola questo o quel suono nella poesia (in genere in un testo artistico) e non lo isola nella comunicazione linguistica quotidiana. Non appena sorge il concetto di testo completamente regolamentato, si forma l'idea della opposizione: «testo regolamentato, testo non regolamentato», e il testo poetico comincia ad essere percepito alla luce di questa antitesi come pienamente regolato. Sorge la possibilità di una interpretazione complementare. Il lettore comincia ad osservare dapprima le regolarità spontanee. Ma lo scrittore è pure un lettore, e così, convinto in partenza che l'organizzazione sonora ha un significato, comincia a organizzarla secondo il proprio particolare piano strutturale. Il lettore continua questo lavoro e completa l'organizzazione del testo in corrispondenza con le sue idee.

J.M. Lotman 1972, pp. 133-34

I.4. I "phonological universals" e il linguaggio poetico: Jakobson, Fònagy e Tsur

- Jakobson, R., Waugh, Linda R., *The Sound Shape of Language*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1979;
- Fònagy, I., *La vive voix. Essais de Psycho-phonétique*, Payot, Paris, 1983;

Tsur, R., *What Makes Sound Patterns Expressive?: The Poetic Mode of Speech Perception*, Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1992.

1. Gli effetti sono inscindibili dai suoni che li producono
2. Questi effetti si esercitano sul piano fisico, emotivo e cognitivo
3. Questi effetti sono universali

Tratti pertinenti nell'analisi: modo e punto di articolazione; differenza tra periodico e aperiodico; differenza tra codificato e non codificato

I.5. Hrushovski's 'general model for sound-meaning relations in poetic texts' (Benjamin Hrushovski, "The Meaning of Sound Patterns in Poetry. An Interaction Theory", *Poetics Today*, vol. 2, 1980, pp. 39-56)

1. Onomatopoeia, or Mimetic sound patterns
2. Expressive sound patterns
3. Focusing sound patterns
4. Neutral sound patterning

TESTO 6: T.S. Eliot, *The Waste Land* (V. "What the Thunder Said", ll. 341-42)

There is not even solitude in the mountains
But red sullen faces sneer and snarl

TESTO 7: W. Shakespeare, Sonnet 30, ll. 1-4

When to the **s**essions of **s**weet **s**ilent **th**ought
I **s**ummon up remembran**ce** of **th**ings pa**s**t,
I **s**igh the lack of many a **th**ing I **s**ought,
And **w**ith old **w**oes new **w**ail my dear time's **w**a**s**te […]

TESTO 8: T.S. Eliot, "Ash-Wednesday" (V)

Against the Word the **unstilled world still whirled**
About the **centre** of the **silent Word**.

PARTE II: FONDAMENTI DI METRICA

II. Nozioni di base

II.1. Ritmo (Rhythm)

Sul versante del suono si ha, in poesia, una organizzazione particolare degli elementi costitutivi del Significante (accento, timbro, altezza, durata, melodia), che determina una serie di 'deformazioni' della lingua naturale […]. Si può adottare la parola 'ritmo' quale termine comprensivo della maggior parte di queste 'deformazioni'.

M. Pagnini 2002, p. 148

Rhythm is a patterning of energy simultaneously produced and perceived; a series of alternations of build-up and release, movement and counter-movement, tending toward regularity but complicated by constant variations and local inflections.

D. Attridge 1995, p. 3

II.2. Metro, verso (verse, line); metro quantitativo, sillabico, accentuale, accentuale-sillabico (quantitative, syllabic, accentual, accentual-syllabic); foot

II.3. Derek Attridge

The Rhythms of English Poetry, Longman, London and New York, 1982; *Poetic Rhythm. An Introduction*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge (UK) 1995

- **Beat/offbeat (conventional symbols: B, o; ⁄, ×; ´, ˘)**

Rhythm in its most elementary form […] is the apprehension of a series of events as a regularly repeated pulse of energy, an experience which has a muscular as well as a mental dimension. The strongest perception of rhythm, however, comes not from a simple succession of stimuli, but from the repeated alternation of a stronger pulse and a fixed number of weaker pulses, usually one or two. The mind prefers to organize its perceptions in such alternating patterns, as is clear from the way in which we hear a clock's succession of identical ticks as a rhythm of stronger and weaker sounds. The strong impulses in such a rhythmic sequence are usually called *beats*, […] and its opposite, *offbeats* […].

D. Attridge 1982, pp. 76-77

- **Double offbeat (conventional symbol: ŏ)**
  two syllables functioning as a relatively weaker rhythmic pulse, as in the example below:
  G.G. Byron, "The Destruction of Sennacherib", l. 19

ŏ B ŏ B ŏ B ŏ B
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone

II.4. Scansion

TESTO 9: W. Blake, "The Tyger", ll. 1-4 (4x4)

B o B o B o B
|Ty ger | Ty ger | burn ing | bright,|

B o B o B o B
|In the| forests |of the| night;|

B o B o B o B
|What im | mortal | hand or | eye, |

o B o B o B o B
|Could frame |thy fear|ful sym|metry?|

II.5. Giambico, trocaico (iambic: o B; trochaic: B o)

TESTO 10: T. Gray "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard", ll. 1-2
o B o B o B o B o B
The curfew tolls the knell of parting day

TESTO 11: R. Browning, "One Word More", l. 1
B o B o B o B o B o
There they are, my fifty men and women

TESTO 12: S.T. COLERIDGE, *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, ll. 119-122

Water, water, every where,

And all the boards did shrink;

Water, water, every where,

Nor any drop to drink.

II.6. Anapestico, dattilico (anapaestic: ŏ B; dactylic: B ŏ)

TESTO 13: G.G. Byron, "The Destruction of Sennacherib", l. 1
ŏ B ŏ B ŏ B ŏ B
The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold

TESTO 14: R. Hodgson, "Eve", ll. 1-2
B ŏ B o B
Eve, with her basket, was.
B ŏ B o B
Deep in the bells and grass.

II.7. Spondaico, pirrico (spondaic: |BB|, pyrrhic: |oo|)

TESTO 15: T. Gray, "Ode on the Death of a Favourite Cat", l. 31
|**B** **B** | o B |o B |o B|
Eight times emerging from the flood

TESTO 16: Sir P. Sidney, *Astrophil and Stella*, 50, ll. 6-8
| **o** **o** | B B |o o| o B |o B|
Nor so fair level in so secret stay,

| o o | B B | o B| o B |o B|
As that sweet black which veils the heavenly eye;

| B o |B o | o B | o B | o B|
There himself with his shot he close doth lay.

II.8. Rising rhythms (o B; ŏ B); falling rhythms (B o; B ŏ)

II.9. Duple metres (B o; o B); triple metres (B ŏ; ŏ B)

II.10. Monometer, dimeter, trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter (Alexandrine), heptameter (fourteneer), octameter

II.11. Iambic pentameter (five-stress/ five-beats iambic verse); blank verse (lines of iambic pentameter which are unrhymed – hence the term "unrhymed")

TESTO 16: W. Shakespeare, *The Tempest*, 5.1

Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,

And ye, that on the sands with printless foot

Do chase the ebbing Neptune, and fly him,

When he comes back; […]

TESTO 17: J. Milton, *Paradise Lost*, I. 1-10

Of man's first disobedience, and the fruit

Of that forbidden tree, whose mortal taste

Brought death into the world, and all our woe,

With loss of Eden, till one greater Man

Restore us, and regain the blissful seat,

Sing, heavenly Muse, that on the secret top

Of Oreb, or of Sinai, didst inspire

That shepherd who first taught the chosen seed

In the beginning how the heavens and earth

Rose out of Chaos […]

TESTO 18: G.G. Byron, "Darkness", ll. 1-5

I had a dream, which was not all a dream.

The bright sun was extinguish'd, and the stars

Did wander darkling in the eternal space,

Rayless, and pathless, and the icy earth

Swung blind and blackening in the moonless air;

II.12. The functions of poetic rhythm (Attridge 1995, pp. 285-315, Chapter 9)

1. Iconic
2. Expressive
3. Associative
4. Emphasis and connection
5. Pattern and cohesion

A Glossary of Literary Terms

SEVENTH EDITION

M. H. ABRAMS
CORNELL UNIVERSITY

HARCOURT BRACE COLLEGE PUBLISHERS
FORT WORTH PHILADELPHIA SAN DIEGO NEW YORK ORLANDO AUSTIN SAN ANTONIO
TORONTO MONTREAL LONDON SYDNEY TOKYO

Meter is the recurrence, in regular units, of a prominent feature in the sequence of speech-sounds of a language. There are four main types of meter in European languages: (1) In classical Greek and Latin, the meter was **quantitative**; that is, it was established by the relative duration of the utterance of a syllable, and consisted of a recurrent pattern of long and short syllables. (2) In French and many other Romance languages, the meter is **syllabic**, depending on the number of syllables within a line of verse, without regard to the fall of the stresses. (3) In the older Germanic languages, including Old English, the meter is **accentual**, depending on the number of stressed syllables within a line, without regard to the number of intervening unstressed syllables. (4) The

fourth type of meter, combining the features of the two preceding types, is **accentual-syllabic**, in which the metric units consist of a recurrent pattern of stresses on a recurrent number of syllables. The stress-and-syllable type has been the predominant meter of English poetry since the fourteenth century.

There is considerable dispute about the most valid way to analyze and classify English meters. This entry will begin by presenting a traditional accentual-syllabic analysis which has the virtues of being simple, widely used, and applicable to by far the greater part of English poetry from Chaucer to the present. Major departures from this stress-and-syllable meter will be described in the latter part of the entry.

In all sustained spoken English we sense a **rhythm**; that is, a recognizeable though varying pattern in the beat of the **stresses**, or **accents** (the more forcefully uttered, hence louder syllables), in the stream of speech-sounds. In meter, this rhythm is structured into a recurrence of regular—that is, approximately equivalent—units of stress-pattern. Compositions written in meter are also known as **verse**.

We attend, in reading verse, to the individual **line**, which is a sequence of words printed as a separate entity on the page. The meter is determined by the pattern of stronger and weaker stresses on the syllables composing the words in the verse-line; the stronger is called the "stressed" syllable and all the weaker ones the "unstressed" syllables. (What the ear perceives as a strong stress is not an absolute quantity, but is relative to the degree of stress in the adjacent syllables.) Three major factors determine where the stresses (in the sense of the relatively stronger stresses or accents) will fall in a line of verse: (1) Most important is the "word accent" in words of more than one syllable; in the noun "áccent" itself, for example, the stress falls on the first syllable. (2) There are also many monosyllabic words in the language, and on which of these—in a sentence or a phrase—the stress will fall depends on the grammatical function of the word (we normally put stronger stress on nouns, verbs, and adjectives, for example, than on articles or prepositions), and depends also on the "rhetorical accent," or the emphasis we give a word because we want to enhance its importance in a particular utterance. (3) Another determinant of perceived stress is the prevailing "metrical accent," which is the beat that we have come to expect, in accordance with the stress pattern that was established earlier in the metrical composition.

If the prevailing stress pattern enforces a drastic alteration of the normal word accent, we get a **wrenched accent**. Wrenching may be the result of a lack of metrical skill; it was, however, conventional in the *folk ballad* (for example, "fair ladíe," "far countrée"), and is sometimes deliberately used for comic effects, as in Lord Byron's *Don Juan* (1819–24) and in the verses of Ogden Nash.

It is possible to distinguish a number of degrees of syllabic stress in English speech, but the most common and generally useful fashion of analyzing and classifying the standard English meters is "binary." That is, we distinguish only two categories—strong stress and weak stress—and group the syllables into metric feet according to the patterning of these two degrees. A **foot** is the combination of a strong stress and the associated weak stress or stresses which make up the recurrent metric unit of a line. The relatively stronger-stressed syllable is called, for short, "stressed"; the relatively weaker-stressed syllables are called "light," or most commonly, "unstressed."

The four standard feet distinguished in English are:

(1) **Iambic** (the noun is "iamb"): an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable.

> Thĕ cúr | fĕw tólls | thĕ knéll | ŏf pár | tĭng dáy. |
> (Thomas Gray, "Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard")

(2) **Anapestic** (the noun is "anapest"): two unstressed syllables followed by a stressed syllable.

> Thĕ Ăs sýr | ĭăn căme dówn | lĭke ă wólf | ŏn thĕ fóld. |
> (Lord Byron, "The Destruction of Sennacherib")

(3) **Trochaic** (the noun is "trochee"): a stressed followed by an unstressed syllable.

> Thére thĕy | áre, mӯ | fíf tӯ | mén ănd | wó mĕn. |
> (Robert Browning, "One Word More")

Most trochaic lines lack the final unstressed syllable—in the technical term, such lines are **catalectic**. So in Blake's "The Tiger":

> Tí gĕr! | tí gĕr! | búrn ĭng | bríght |
> Ín thĕ | fó rĕst | óf thĕ | níght. |

(4) **Dactylic** (the noun is "dactyl"): a stressed syllable followed by two unstressed syllables.

> Éve, wĭth hĕr | bás kĕt, wăs |
> Déep ĭn thĕ | bélls ănd grăss. |
> (Ralph Hodgson, "Eve")

Iambs and anapests, since the strong stress is at the end, are called "rising meter"; trochees and dactyls, with the strong stress at the beginning, are called "falling meter." Iambs and trochees, having two syllables, are called "duple meter"; anapests and dactyls, having three syllables, are called "triple meter." It should be noted that the iamb is by far the commonest English foot.

Two other feet are often distinguished by special titles, although they occur in English meter only as variants from standard feet:

(5) **Spondaic** (the noun is "spondee"): two successive syllables with approximately equal strong stresses, as in each of the first two feet of this line:

> Góod stróng| thíck stúpĕ fӯl ĭng ínCĕnse smóke.|
> (Browning, "The Bishop Orders His Tomb")

Pyrrhic (the noun is also "pyrrhic"): a foot composed of two successive syllables with approximately equal light stresses, as in the second and fourth feet in this line:

> Mý wăy̆ | ĭs tŏ | bĕ gín | wĭth thĕ | bĕ gín nĭng|
> (Byron, *Don Juan*)

This latter term is used only infrequently. Some traditional metrists deny the existence of a true pyrrhic, on the grounds that the prevailing metrical accent—in the above instance, iambic—always imposes a slightly stronger stress on one of the two syllables.

A metric line is named according to the number of feet composing it:

monometer: one foot
dimeter: two feet
trimeter: three feet
tetrameter: four feet
pentameter: five feet
hexameter: six feet (an **Alexandrine** is a line of six iambic feet)
heptameter: seven feet (a **fourteener** is another term for a line of seven iambic feet—hence, of fourteen syllables; it tends to break into a unit of four feet followed by a unit of three feet)
octameter: eight feet

To describe the meter of a line we name (a) the predominant foot and (b) the number of feet it contains. In the illustrations above, for example, the line from Gray's "Elegy" is "iambic pentameter," and the line from Byron's "The Destruction of Sennacherib" is "anapestic tetrameter."

To **scan** a passage of verse is to go through it line by line, analyzing the component feet, and also indicating where any major pauses in the phrasing fall within a line. Here is a **scansion**, signified by conventional symbols, of the first five lines from John Keats' *Endymion* (1818). The passage was chosen because it exemplifies a flexible and variable rather than a highly regular metrical pattern.

> *(1)* Ă thíng | ŏf béau | tý̆ ís | ă jóy | fŏr é vĕr: |
> *(2)* Íts lóve | lĭ nĕss | ĭn créas | ĕs; // ít | wĭll név ĕr |
> *(3)* Páss ĭn | tŏ nóth | ĭng nĕss, | // bŭt stíll | wĭll kéep |
> *(4)* Ă bów | ĕr quí | ĕt fŏr | ŭs, // ánd | ă sléep |
> *(5)* Fúll ŏf | swĕet dréams, | ănd héalth, | ănd quí | ĕt bréath ĭng. |

The prevailing meter is iambic pentameter. As in all fluent verse, however, there are many variations upon the basic iambic foot; these are sometimes called "substitutions." Thus:

(1) The closing feet of lines 1, 2, and 5 end with an extra unstressed syllable, and are said to have a **feminine ending.** In lines 3 and 4, the closing feet, because they are standard iambs, end with a stressed syllable and are said to have **masculine endings.**

(2) In lines 3 and 5, the opening iambic feet have been "inverted" to form trochees. (The initial position is the most common place for inversions in iambic verse.)

(3) I have marked the second foot in line 2, and the third foot of line 3 and line 4, as pyrrhics (two unstressed syllables); these help to give Keats' verses their rapid movement. This is a procedure in scansion about which metric analysts disagree: some will feel enough of a metric beat to mark all these feet as iambs; others will mark still other feet (for example, the third foot of line 1) as pyrrhics also. And some metrists prefer to use symbols measuring two degrees of strong stress, and will indicate a difference in the feet, as follows:

> Íts lŏ̋ve | lĭ néss | ĭn crĕ̋as | ĕs.

Notice, however, that these are differences only in nuance; analysts agree that the prevailing pulse of Keats' versification is iambic throughout, and that despite many variations, the felt norm is of five stresses in the verse-line.

Two other elements are important in the metric movement of Keats' passage: (1) In lines 1 and 5, the pause in the reading—which occurs naturally at the end of a sentence, clause, or other syntactic unit—coincides with the end of the line; such lines are called **end-stopped**. Lines 2 through 4, on the other hand, are called **run-on lines** (or in a term derived from the French, they exhibit **enjambment**—"a striding-over"), because the pressure of the incompleted syntactic unit toward closure carries on over the end of the verse-line. (2) When a strong phrasal pause falls within a line, as in lines 2, 3, and 4, it is called a **caesura**—indicated in the quoted passage by the conventional symbol //. The management of these internal pauses is important for giving variety and for providing expressive emphases in the long pentameter line.

To understand the use and limitations of an analysis such as this, we must realize that a prevailing metric pattern (iambic pentameter, in the passage from Keats) establishes itself as a perceived norm which controls the reader's expectations, even though the number of lines that deviate from the norm may exceed the number that fit the norm exactly. In addition, scansion is an abstract scheme which deliberately omits notation of many aspects of the actual reading of a poem that contribute importantly to its pace, rhythm, and total impression. It does not specify, for example, whether the component words in a metric line are short words or long words, or whether the strong stresses fall on short vowels or long vowels; it does not give any indication of the *intonation*—the overall rise and fall in the pitch and loudness of the voice—which we use to bring out the meaning and rhetorical effect of these poetic lines; nor does it indicate the interplay of the metric stresses with the rhythms of the varied phrasal and clausal structures within a sustained poetic passage. Such details are omitted in order to lay bare the essential metric skeleton; that is, the pattern of the stronger and weaker stresses in the syllabic sequence of a verse-line. Moreover, an actual reading of a poem, if it is a skillful reading, will not accord mechanically with the scansion. There is a difference between the scansion, as

an abstract metrical norm, and a skilled and expressive oral reading, or **performance**, of a poem; and no two competent readers will perform the same lines in precisely the same way. But in a performance, the metric norm indicated by the scansion is sensed as an implicit understructure of pulses; in fact, the interplay of an expressive performance, sometimes with and sometimes against this underlying structural pattern, gives tension and vitality to our experience of verse.

We need to note, finally, that some kinds of versification which occur in English poetry differ from the syllable-and-stress type already described:

(1) **Strong-stress meters** or **accentual verse.** In this meter, native to English and other Germanic languages, only the beat of the strong stresses counts in the scanning, while the number of intervening light syllables is highly variable. Usually there are four strong-stressed syllables in a line, whose beat is emphasized by *alliteration.* This was the meter of Old English poetry and continued to be the meter of many Middle English poems, until Chaucer and others popularized the syllable-and-stress meter. In the opening passage, for example, of *Piers Plowman* (later fourteenth century) the four strong stresses (always divided by a medial caesura) are for the most part reinforced by alliteration (see *alliterative meter*); the light syllables, which vary in number, are recessive and do not assert their individual presence:

> In a sómer séson, // whan sóft was the sónne,
> I shópe me in shróudes, // as Í a shépe were,
> In hábits like an héremite, // unhóly of wórkes,
> Went wýde in this wórld, // wónders to hére.

Strong-stress meter survives in *folk* poetry and in traditional children's rhymes such as "Hickory, dickory, dock" and was revived as an artful literary meter by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in *Christabel* (1816), in which each line has four strong stresses but the number of syllables within a line varies from four to twelve.

What G. M. Hopkins in the later nineteenth century called his **sprung rhythm** is a variant of strong-stress meter: each foot, as he describes it, begins with a stressed syllable, which may either stand alone or be associated with from one to three (occasionally even more) light syllables. Two six-stress lines from Hopkins' "The Wreck of the *Deutschland*" indicate the variety of the rhythms in this meter, and also exemplify its most striking feature: the great weight of the strong stresses, and the frequent juxtaposition of strong stresses (*spondees*) at any point in the line. The stresses in the second line were marked in a manuscript by Hopkins himself; they indicate that in complex instances, his metric decisions may seem arbitrary:

> The | sóur | scýthe | crínge, and the | bléar | sháre | cóme. |
> Our | héarts' chárity's | héarth's | fíre, our | thóughts' chivalry's |
> thróng's | Lórd. |

(See Marcella M. Holloway, *The Prosodic Theory of Gerard Manley Hopkins*, 1947.) A number of modern metrists, including T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound, skillfully interweave both strong-stress and syllable-and-stress meters in some of their versification.

(2) *Quantitative meters* in English are written in imitation of classical Greek and Latin versification, in which the metrical pattern is not determined by the stress but by the "quantity" (duration of pronunciation) of a syllable, and the foot consists of a combination of "long" and "short" syllables. Sir Philip Sidney, Edmund Spenser, Thomas Campion, and other Elizabethan poets experimented with this meter in English, as did Coleridge, Tennyson, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, and Robert Bridges later on. The strong accentual character of English, however, as well as the indeterminateness of the duration of a syllable in the English language, makes it impossible to sustain a quantitative meter for any length. See Derek Attridge, *Well-Weighted Syllables: Elizabethan Verse in Classical Meters* (1974).

(3) In *free verse* (discussed in a separate entry), the component lines have no (or only occasional) metric feet, or uniform stress-patterns.

George Saintsbury, *Historical Manual of English Prosody* (1910), and R. M. Alden, *English Verse* (1930), are well-illustrated treatments of traditional syllable-and-stress metrics. For later discussions of this and alternative metric theories see George R. Stewart, *The Technique of English Verse* (1930); Seymour Chatman, *A Theory of Meter* (1965); and W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, "The Concept of Meter" (1959). This last essay is reprinted in W. K. Wimsatt, *Hateful Contraries* (1965), and in Harvey Gross, ed., *The Structure of Verse* (1966)—an anthology that reprints other useful essays, including Northrop Frye, "The Rhythm of Recurrence," and Yvor Winters, "The Audible Reading of Poetry." See also W. K. Wimsatt, ed., *Versification: Major Language Types* (1972); Paul Fussell, *Poetic Meter and Poetic Form* (rev., 1979); John Hollander, *Rhyme's Reason: A Guide to English Verse* (1981); Anthony Easthope, *Poetry as Discourse* (1983); T. V. F. Brogan, *English Versification, 1570–1980* (1981).

Miracle Plays, Morality Plays, and Interludes are types of late-medieval drama, written in a variety of verse forms.

The **miracle play** had as its subject either a story from the Bible, or else the life and martyrdom of a saint. In the usage of some historians, however, "Miracle play" denotes only dramas based on saints' lives, and the term **mystery play**—"mystery" in the archaic sense of the "trade" conducted by each of the medieval guilds who sponsored these plays—is applied only to dramas based on the Bible.

The plays representing biblical narratives originated within the church in about the tenth century, in dramatizations of brief parts of the Latin liturgical service, called **tropes**, especially the "Quem quaeritis" ("Whom are you seeking") trope portraying the visit of the three Marys to the tomb of Christ. Gradually these evolved into complete plays which were written in English instead

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