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ENGLISH METRES

BY

WILLIAM STRUNK, JR.

**PROFESSOR OF ENGLISH
CORNELL UNIVERSITY**

**CORNELL CO-OPERATIVE SOCIETY
ITHACA, NEW YORK
1922**



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PREFACE

The aim of this book is to provide a brief explanation of the nature of English verse and of the means used to analyze and describe it, together with a description and history of the more frequent metrical forms. The examples are for the greater part from poems commonly studied in courses in English and American literature. It has seemed best to recognize that many points in metrical theory are still debatable. The method of marking scansion that has been employed is, of course, only one of many, but is that which, on the whole, most commends itself to the writer. For further study are recommended R. M. Alden, *English Verse*; C. F. Andrews, *The Writing and Reading of Verse*; Robert Bridges, *Milton's Prosody*; C. F. Jacob, *The Foundation and Nature of Verse*; T. S. Omond, *English Metrists*. The work last mentioned gives a complete history of the subject, with full bibliography. To these works the writer wishes to record his obligations. He takes this occasion to express his thanks to his colleagues Professors Martin Sampson, F. C. Prescott, and F. E. Fiske, for helpful comments on his manuscript, and Mr. J. H. Nelson, for assistance in reading the proof.



CHAPTER I

THE NATURE OF VERSE

The word *verse* will be used in the following pages in the meaning of rhythmically organized language, the kind of language in which poetry is written. To avoid confusion, the word will not be used in the meaning of line or of stanza. The study of verse is essentially the study of the sound of poetry, not in utter disregard of the sense, but at least a study radically different from the study of the ideas or the imagery or the diction.

The study of the sound of verse cannot, of course, wholly disregard the sense, because the sound and the sense are inseparably connected. In verse, as in prose, the position of the pauses between words, the relative emphasis of different syllables, the speed or slowness with which a passage is read, though allowing of a certain amount of variation, are all determined or influenced by the sense. In verse, far more than in prose, the choice of words, and consequently the shade of meaning conveyed, is in part determined by considerations of sound. Further, as will be explained and illustrated later, in verse we often find correspondences of another kind between sense and sound: lines and groups of lines which correspond to each other in a metrical pattern are often paralleled or contrasted in sense.

Verse is often spoken of as rhyme, sometimes in disparagement, as if it were nothing but the matching of syllables, sometimes in poetic language, as when Milton says,

Things unattempted yet in prose or rhyme.

But while this use of the term rhyme for verse is evidence that rhyme is ordinarily a conspicuous element

in the verse in which it occurs, it is not essential to verse. Classical Greek and Latin verse was without rhyme, and unrhymed verse is common in English and in many other modern languages. An examination of rhymed verse will show that its effect, which we uncritically assume to be due solely to the presence of rhyme, is in reality produced by several factors. The syllables that rhyme bear stress, and they occur at more or less regular intervals of time. This is as apparent in a nursery jingle like "Tom, Tom, the piper's son" as in a poem of lofty sentiment and diction like *Lycidas*. Nor are the rhyming words likely to be the only ones that have been selected with regard to their sound. In the aforesaid "Tom, Tom," there is a reason for its being a pig that the piper's son stole: *piper* and *pig* begin with the same sound. We feel a certain appropriateness that would have been absent if he had stolen, say, a sheep. There is also a reason for his roaring instead of howling or crying: *run* and *roar* begin with the same sound.

In unrhymed verse, the same elements are present: certain syllables are through stress more prominent than others and occur at more or less regular intervals of time; words are chosen and grouped together, not merely for their meaning and associations, but in part for their sound.

These two elements of verse will in this discussion be called rhythm and harmony.

The term rhythm, in a broad sense, is applicable to any wave-like progression, one which rises and falls recurrently. It is an essential element in music, in dancing, in anything that, as we say, has a swing to it. Indeed, there is little doubt that poetry, music, and the dance had a common origin in the expression of emotion through rhythm. In early stages of culture the three are practiced together. Song without dancing, verse not intended for singing, are later developments. But through all, verse remains, in literature, preeminently the lan-

guage of the emotions, and for that reason is characterized by rhythm. It is thus, at any rate, that we ordinarily distinguish verse from prose. It is difficult to draw the line where rhythm begins and ends, because of the "sense of rhythm" which enables most persons to feel or imagine the presence of rhythm even in a mechanically regular series of sounds, such as a perfectly uniform series of tickings of a clock, and enables some to feel or imagine its presence in what to others would be a wholly random and unorganized series. Prose may be rhythmical as well as verse; doubtless some readers feel the presence of rhythm in all prose. But verse differs from prose in that its rhythm is more constant, more uniform, and more significant.

As it appears in verse, rhythm may be defined as the arrangement of syllables in groups based on their varying intensity and tending to require the same time for pronunciation. The pattern of the groups may be exactly the same, as in the line,

And now they never meet in grove or green,

which may be regarded as made up of five groups of two syllables each, unstressed followed by stressed, each group taking substantially the same time to pronounce. Or there may be variations: in one or more groups the stressed and unstressed syllables may change places; three syllables may take the place of two; these and other variations may be so numerous as to make the line depart widely from the basic rhythm. To illustrate the possibilities of variation (in a different rhythm) may be cited a stanza from a chorus in Gilbert Murray's translation of the *Hippolytus*:

To the strand of the Daughters of the Sunset,
The Apple-tree, the singing and the gold;
Where the mariner must stay him from his onset,
And the red wave is tranquil as of old;
Yea, beyond that Pillar of the end

That Atlas guardeth, would I wend;
Where a voice of living waters never ceaseth
In God's quiet garden by the sea,
And Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth
Joy among the meadows like a tree.

While the reader should have no difficulty in falling into the swing of these lines, it might puzzle him to decide what is the basic rhythmical unit or foot. If he begins to analyze their metrical structure, he will doubtless first note that the number of strongly stressed syllables in each line is three. Next he will note that between two such stresses fall one, two, or three unstressed or very slightly stressed syllables. But in six of the lines, the number of syllables between stresses is uniformly three. He will therefore assume a basic foot of four syllables, with a single principal stress. Now some of the lines begin with two unstressed syllables, some with one, some with a stress. He will probably find it simplest to regard the basic foot as beginning with a stress, the combination found in "joy among the" and "meadows like a." He will then be able to describe each line as made up of repetitions and variations of this foot. The variations will include the prefixing of one or of two unstressed syllables at the beginning of the line, the absence of one or two unstressed syllables from any foot before the last, and the absence of two or of three unstressed syllables from each final foot. Yet, although this sounds very complicated when described, the reader can hardly fail to catch the swing of the lines at once. They may be hard to scan, but they are easy to read and to enjoy.

The original meaning of the word harmony, in Greek, was a joining, as in building or carpentry; from this it came to mean agreement or concord in general, and then a concord of musical sounds. It was first employed in English in the sense of music or melody, referring to the combination of musical sounds, whether simultaneous or

successive. From this sense its use was extended to apply to the pleasing combination of words in poetry and even to the beautiful sound of the words in themselves. It is therefore appropriate to use this term as the name of the other conspicuous element in the sound of verse, namely, the pleasing effect, other than rhythmical, produced by syllables, or their vowels or consonants, due either to their agreeable quality in themselves or to repetition or contrast.

In such passages as

When Charlemain with all his peerage fell
At Fontarabbia,

(*Paradise Lost* I. 586-587)

or

Under the shade of melancholy boughs,
Lose and neglect the creeping hours of time,

(*As You Like It* II. vii. 111-112)

it will probably be felt that for the most part the individual syllables are pleasing in sound. The stressed syllables for the most part contain long vowels or diphthongs; there are few "hard" (unvoiced) consonants. By comparing with these lines a line from Swinburne's burlesque of Browning,

Ah, how can fear sit and hear as love hears it grief's heart's cracked
grates screech?

we can recognize wherein harmony in this sense differs from harshness. It may be more important that the expressions "Charlemain with all his peerage," "the shade of melancholy boughs," and "the creeping hours of time" call up visual images and are attended by romantic associations of various kinds, appealing directly or indirectly to the emotions, but it remains true that these expressions are made up of more pleasing sounds than those ingeniously compounded by Swinburne in the line above quoted, and that this is one of the sources of the reader's pleasure.

The familiar lines which Coleridge declared he had composed in a dream,

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran,
Through caverns measureless to man,
Down to a sunless sea,

(*Kubla Khan* 1-5)

illustrate many varieties of harmony. The rhymes, and the alliteration of the initial consonants of *Kubla* and *Khan*, *river* and *ran*, *measureless* and *man*, *sunless* and *sea*, are most apparent. But note further the repetition of *d* in *Xanadu*, *did*, *decree*, *dome*, and *down*; the repetition of the *k*-sound from the first line in *caverns*; the assonance (vowel-correspondence without rhyme) of *Alph* and *caverns* with the rhyming words *ran* and *man*; the contrast between the two sets of rhymes; and the contrast in the last line between the vowels of *sunless* and of *sea*.

Harmony, like rhythm, is not limited to verse; prose may also have harmony. But the harmony of verse, like its rhythm, is more constant and more obvious than that of prose.

The succeeding chapters will examine in greater detail the particular forms of rhythm and harmony in verse, and their relation to the content.

CHAPTER II

METRICAL AND FREE VERSE

It has been pointed out in the preceding chapter that the most marked difference between verse and prose is a difference of rhythm. While prose may be in whole or part rhythmical, or may seem so to readers with a highly developed rhythmical sense, rhythm is not an essential element of prose and forms no part of its definition. But in verse, rhythm is an essential element, without which the verse would not be verse at all. The question whether harmony, in the sense defined, is equally essential, need not detain us; harmony is at least always present in some form, and if verse is deficient in harmony, it is felt to be for that reason inartistic and unsatisfactory.

With regard to its rhythmical structure, verse may be divided into two kinds, metrical and free verse. In the first, the rhythm manifests itself in a pattern which may be defined, with allowance for variation, by some numerical rule; which with some changes of terminology may be scanned, that is, described, by the methods of Latin and Greek prosody. In the second, the rhythm is hardly to be brought under any single rule; the pattern is constantly changing.

The relative merits of the two, as mediums for poetic expression, have been much debated of late. There are readers, some of them poets themselves, who see in free verse only a kind of no man's land lying between metrical language and prose, a kind of metrical anarchy. These critics of free verse maintain that a great part of the pleasure felt in the reading of verse arises from the poet's mastery of technique, from his skillful handling of a metrical form so that it seems to enhance, and not hamper,

his expression. This pleasure they fail to derive from free verse. The advocates of free verse, contrariwise, see in metre a mechanical formalism, an outworn convention, a constant impediment to the perfect correspondence between form and content. The quarrel, if such it may be called, is but one manifestation of the opposition between traditionalists and individualists, between those who feel that the interests of art are best served by preserving a traditional standard and those who find in standards a hindrance to freedom of expression.

Free verse is not new. Milton says in his brief essay on tragedy prefixed to *Samson Agonistes*, "The measure of verse used in the chorus (of this tragedy) is of all sorts, called by the Greeks monostrophic or rather *apolelymenon*," that is, loosed or free. The lines he uses are prevailingly iambic, of varying lengths, with occasional rhymes:

As one past hope, abandoned,
And by himself given over;
In slavish habit, ill-fitted weeds
O'er-worn and soiled;
Or do my eyes misrepresent? Can this be he,
That heroic, that renowned,
Irresistible Samson, whom unarmed
No strength of man or fiercest wild beast could withstand?

(*Samson Agonistes* 120-127)

Blake, in his preface to *Jerusalem*, spoke disparagingly of the "monotonous cadence" of Milton and Shakespeare, "as much a bondage as rhyme itself." He described his own verse as containing "a variety in every line, both of cadences and number of syllables." A specimen passage of his verse in longer lines is as follows:

When winter rends the hungry family and the snow falls
Upon the ways of men, hiding the paths of man and beast,
Then mourns the wanderer; then he repents his wanderings and
eyes
The distant forest; then the slave groans in the dungeon of stone,
The captive of the will of the stranger, held for scanty hire.

(*Jerusalem* 20. 12-16)

Matthew Arnold has many poems in unrhymed lines, with the rhythm freely varied:

April showers
Rush over the Yorkshire moors.
Stormy, through driving mist,
Loom the blurr'd hills; the rain
Lashes the newly made grave.

(*Epilogue*)

A poet of to-day would probably divide the last two lines differently:

Loom the blurr'd hills;
The rain lashes the newly made grave.

This would free them from the appearance of following a metrical pattern.

No brief quotation can do justice to the manifold rhythms of Walt Whitman, yet a few lines will serve to illustrate how far he departed from set measures and how definitely the rhythm of his lines is marked.

From this hour, freedom!
From this time I ordain myself loos'd of limits and imaginary lines,
Going where I list, my own master, total and absolute,
Listening to others, and considering well what they say,
Pausing, searching, receiving, contemplating,
Gently, but with unyielding will, divesting myself of the holds
that would hold me.

(*Song of the Open Road* 53-58)

William Ernest Henley (d. 1903) may fairly be said to have composed a number of his poems in free verse of the type that is written to-day. See, especially, the group called *Rhymes and Rhythms*. He showed the possibilities of free verse as a medium for graphic description and intense feeling, and obtained for it a much wider recognition than it had received before. Since his day, free verse has become increasingly popular.

It is sometimes hard to draw the line between metre and free verse. There are degrees of freedom. Certainly the sonnet and blank verse are not free, yet blank verse

may be freely treated, as will be illustrated later. At the other extreme, the freest of free verse usually includes many perfectly regular lines, though the reader has no means of knowing when to expect them. In general, the distinguishing marks of free verse are that the rhythm is free to change not only from line to line but within the line, and that such "regular" lines as may occur do not serve as a standard pattern of which the others may be regarded as variations. Some writing offered under the name of free verse, however, has been so colloquial in tone, so indeterminate in rhythm, and so commonplace in subject and treatment that the reader has difficulty in recognizing in it anything but chopped-up prose.

For all the recent popularity of free verse, the great body of English poetry has been written in more or less regular metres. These only will be considered in the succeeding chapters.

CHAPTER III

THE LINE AND THE FOOT

To the eye, the most obvious feature of verse is that it is written in lines. Indeed, the Latin word *versus*, from which the English word verse is derived, means a turning, and hence denotes that kind of language in which the writer turns back, instead of going on to the margin as in prose (*prosa oratio*, straightforward language). Though verse, and with it the line, existed before the invention of writing, they are known by names which refer to their form when written or printed.

What is a line? Is it a purely arbitrary group of consecutive words, or are its limits determined by some principle? Is a poem composed of lines, or divided into lines? Clearly, in most poems written in stanzas, or in couplets, the lines are marked off by the rhymes. But in these there are occasionally internal rhymes, which do not mark a line-ending, as,

The splendour falls on castle walls.

And what determines the line in unrhymed verse?

Briefly, it may be answered that the line is the real unit of versification. It is a group of syllables whose rhythm represents a pattern intended by the writer and felt by the reader. This pattern may be called the basic rhythm. A given line may conform exactly to the basic rhythm:

And now they never meet in grove or green;

or it may depart widely from it, as,

The eloquent blood told an ineffable tale,

which is hardly to be recognized as in the same metre. A metre may be based on a single pattern, as in blank verse, or on a combination of patterns, as in stanzas with lines of different lengths or rhythms. The patterns may vary

from line to line, recurring, but not at fixed intervals, as in Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*. Or the rhythms may be so varied and changing that each line is a law unto itself. We can then no longer, by comparing two or more lines with each other, derive from them a pattern of which they present variants. At this point, we have arrived at free verse, something lying outside of metre as here defined. But the line is always the definite form in which the rhythm is manifested.

This implies that in reading verse or in reciting it, the end of the line is indicated by a pause. This pause may or may not correspond to a natural pause determined by the sentence structure. If it does not, it may be slight, almost imperceptible, but it should none the less be there. The reader may of course be justified in ignoring a line-division here or there for some special purpose, but as soon as he fails to indicate the line-division to his hearers, he is reading the verse not as verse, but as rhythmical prose.

To make a statement in the form of a single, self-contained line is a familiar and natural means of giving it prominence.

The quality of mercy is not strained.

They also serve who only stand and wait.

Not without hope we suffer and we mourn.

A thing of beauty is a joy for ever.

The One remains, the many change and pass.

But a series of self-contained lines would soon produce an impression of monotony and lifelessness.

One element in the artistic quality of poetry is the conflict between the line and the clause, between the rhythmical structure and the logical structure. Verse in which each line is a complete clause or sentence, set off by marks of punctuation, is almost certain to be monotonous. The beauty of blank verse in particular lies in its consisting of syllables grouped into lines according to one principle and of words grouped into sentences according to another.

From line to line the two groupings coincide, almost coincide, fall apart, conflict in various degrees, and end by coinciding.

The cottage which was named the Evening Star
Is gone—the ploughshare has been through the ground
On which it stood; great changes have been wrought
In all the neighbourhood:—yet the oak is left
That grew beside the door; and the remains
Of the unfinished sheep-fold may be seen
Beside the boisterous brook of Greenhead Ghyll.

(Wordsworth, *Michael* 476-482)

When the sense is thus carried over from one line to another, the final line of the passage is commonly a complete clause or phrase, in the basic rhythm, bringing the two groupings into accord. Often two or more such regular lines conclude a passage.

We are not now that strength which in old days
Moved earth and heaven; that which we are, we are;
One equal temper of heroic hearts,
Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

(Tennyson, *Ulysses* 66-70)

For the study of their rhythm, lines are divided into feet, corresponding to the metrical pulsations or waves. Each foot, as a rule, consists of from two to four syllables, of which one is stressed, either because it would naturally be stressed in a similar passage of prose, or because, having already caught the rhythm from preceding lines, we accommodate our reading of the new line to the pattern already in our mind.

My lord, I shall reply amazedly,
Half sleep, half waking; but as yet I swear,
I cannot truly say how I came here.

(*Midsummer Night's Dream* IV. i. 152-154)

Three stresses in the first of these lines and four in the second are so strongly marked that the reader has no difficulty in recognizing the rhythm intended, and in reading the lines accordingly. The third line, if it stood

by itself, would probably not suggest a regular metrical pattern. But when we come upon it, already knowing the pattern, we leave the word *came* unstressed and stress the final syllable *here*. This is sufficient to bring the line within the metrical scheme.

In classifying and describing lines the first points to be noted are (1) the basic foot; (2) the number of feet; (3) any excess or defect of unstressed syllables at the beginning or end. More detailed description will take account of (4) substitutions of other feet for the basic foot; (5) the position of the caesura; (6) the degree of stress upon the final syllable, if that is in a position calling for stress; (7) the presence or absence of a pause at the end of the line.

Though this may sound painfully minute, it is of course much less than is brought out when the line is read aloud. And so far no account has been taken of at least one very important circumstance, namely, that the syllables which constitute the line are grouped not only into feet, but also into words. Similar to the conflict and coincidence of the line and the phrase or clause, already discussed, is that of the foot and the word, upon which depend many delicate metrical effects. But for most purposes, it will be sufficient to note the points listed above.

Basic Feet

It is sufficient to recognize six basic feet. They may be grouped according to their number of syllables (two, three, or four), or according to the position of their stresses (rising, when an unstressed syllable comes first; falling, when the stressed syllable comes first).

	Two syllables	Three syllables	Four syllables
Rising . . .	iamb (v')	anapest (vv')	double iamb (v'vv)
Falling . . .	trochee (v)	dactyl (vvv)	double trochee (v'vv)

Examples of lines composed of these feet

Iamb Ambi|tious life|and lá|bors áll|in váin.

Trochee	Willows whíten, áspens quíver.
Anapest	All the héart and the sóul and the séns es forév er in jóy.
Dactyl	Júst for a hándful of sílver he léft us.
Double iamb	Then míghtily rose Sátan and abóut the earth he híed.
Double trochee	Jóy among the méadows like a trée.

In the last three examples the last foot is incomplete; the missing stressed syllables are compensated for by a pause.

The names iamb, trochee, anapest, dactyl have been borrowed from classical prosody, with a change of implication. As used of Greek and Latin verse, they refer to the quantity of syllables (the length of time taken to utter them); used of English verse, they refer only to stress (the force with which syllables are uttered).

A third trisyllabic foot, the amphibrach, with the stress in the second place, is usually described in treatises on metre, but may be disregarded. Lines composed of feet of this kind may be satisfactorily described as anapestic or dactylic, with an initial unstressed syllable omitted or prefixed. Thus the line,

Our bugles sang truce, for the night-cloud had lower'd,
may be regarded as anapestic tetrameter, with an initial syllable omitted and an extra syllable at the end. The anapest, rather than the dactyl, is here chosen as the basic foot because other lines of the poem, such as,

And the sentinel stars set their watch in the sky,
are wholly composed of anapests.

The terms double iamb and double trochee are innovations. Verse in quadrisyllabic feet has puzzled most writers on metre. Lanier, in his *Science of English Verse* (1880), seems to have been the first to give it clear and satisfactory treatment. In his system of figuring the rhythm of verse by musical notation, he represented these measures by four-eight time. With this clue, all the difficulties disappear, yet we still find such poems as Tennyson's *In the Valley of Caunteretz*, Meredith's *Love in*

the Valley, and Kipling's *Last Chantey* explained as written in "mixed metre" or in "combinations of different feet."

In quadrisyllabic feet it is not uncommon to find a perceptible secondary stress on the second syllable after the main stress. Thus the word *earth*, in the third foot of the double-iambic line above, has more stress than the syllables before and after it. So in the double-trochaic line quoted, the syllables *-mong* and *like* are slightly stressed.

It is possible, though a departure from custom, to dispense with the notion of feet in rising rhythm, just as in musical notation all rhythms are represented by measures beginning with an accent. But it saves words to call a line, for instance, iambic instead of calling it trochaic with anacrusis. And although, as explained below, the distinction between rising and falling rhythms may become indifferent in a poem in which they are freely interchanged, readers are conscious of a difference in effect between the corresponding rising and falling rhythms, though they would doubtless have difficulty in putting it into words. Observe, for example, the use made by Wordsworth of trochaic lines in his *Song at the Feast of Brougham Castle*.

In some poems the corresponding rising and falling rhythms are freely interchanged.

Cóme, but kéeep thy wónted státe,
With éven stép, and músing gáit.

(Milton, *Il Penseroso*)

Knów ye the lánd of the cédar and víne,
Where the flówers ever blóssom, the béams ever shíne?

(Byron, *The Bride of Abydos*)

Áll along the válley, whére thy waters flów,
I wálked with one I lóved two and thírty years agó.

(Tennyson, *In The Valley of Caunteretz*)

In the above examples a line in rising rhythm follows one in the corresponding falling rhythm and without the final unstressed syllable or syllables. The result is that the original rhythm seems to be carried over into the

second line without interruption, or rather, with less interruption than if the two lines had been exactly alike. In the third example, the first line ends with the first syllable of a double trochee, and the second may be regarded as beginning with the fourth syllable of the same foot carried over.

Usually, where variation of this kind occurs, one of the two types of foot is much the more common. For example, *Il Penseroso*, quoted above, is for the most part composed in iambic lines. Whether we should describe the remainder as trochaic, or as iambic lacking the opening unstressed syllable, is a purely verbal question. The stanza cited in Chapter I illustrates how, in four-syllabled metre, lines in rising and in falling rhythms may alternate so freely that it becomes hard to say which of the two is basic and which is the variation. The question is unimportant; what is important is that the reader should be able to follow the rhythm of the poem as he goes along. He will ordinarily be able to do this better if he can describe it in consistent language, but there is more than one way of doing this.

The reader may be uncertain whether or not the metre of a given poem is based on a four-syllabled foot. For instance, the line is in rising rhythm and of, say, ten or fourteen syllables. They can be grouped in iambs. Is this right, or should these iambs be combined in pairs, with a single iamb left over at the end? The question must be decided, by examining not a single line, for any single line may vary considerably from the type, but a number of lines. If in these a series of alternate stresses are regularly strong, and the intermediate stresses slight, the foot is four-syllabled, otherwise not. One might, for example, mistakenly read the first line of Gray's *Elegy* as

The cúrfew tolls|the knéll of part|ing dáy,
but he could not go on,

The lówing herd|winds slówly o'er|the léa,

because *herd* requires a strong stress, and *winds* is likewise stressed. Compare with these the line already given as an example of the double iamb. Similarly, though some single lines of *Locksley Hall* will fit easily into the rhythm of the double trochee, as,

Better|fifty years of|Éurope than a|cýcle of Ca|tháy,
 the reader will soon find out that others will not, and that the rapid movement of the four-syllabled foot would be inappropriate to the tone of the poem.

Number of Feet

The number of feet in the line is indicated by the terms dimeter, of two feet; trimeter, of three feet; tetrameter, of four feet; pentameter, of five feet; hexameter, of six feet; heptameter, of seven feet.

Iambic dimeter	Amíd the stórm.
Iambic trimeter	The góld en yéars retúrn.
Trochaic trimeter	Lítte Lámb, who máde thee?
Anapestic trimeter	I am món arch of áll I survéy.
Dactylic trimeter	Sénd but a sóng over séa for us.
Iambic tetrameter	Where móre is méant than méets the éar.
Trochaic tetrameter	Nów pur súing, nów re tréating.
Anapestic tetrameter	In the sílence of mórn ing the sóng of the bírd.
Iambic pentameter	And stíll they gázed, and stíll the wón der gréw.
Trochaic pentameter	Máde and wróte them ín a cértain vólume.
Iambic hexameter	The wréath which Dán te's brów alóne had wórñ befóre.
Iambic heptameter	There's nó a jóy the wórld can gíve like thát it tákes awáy.

Excess and Defect

Some lines in rising rhythm have one or two unstressed syllables following the last stress. Such lines are said to have a feminine ending or a double feminine ending. The origin of the term is that disyllabic rhymes in French are called feminine rhymes, because they may be formed with feminine adjectives.

Examples

Anapestic dimeter with feminine ending

He is góne|on the móunt|áin.

Iambic trimeter with feminine ending By clóud|and míst|abát|éd.

Anapestic trimeter with feminine ending

For a dáy|and a níght|and a mór|rów.

Iambic tetrameter with feminine ending

And lóud|resóund|ed mírth|and dánc|íng.

Iambic pentameter with feminine ending

On púr|ple péaks|a déep|er sháde|descénd|íng.

Iambic pentameter with double feminine ending

Untáint|ed, ún|exám|in'd, frée,|at líb|értý.

I dáre|avoúch|it, sír. | Whát, fíf|ty fól|lówěrs?

The term double feminine ending is chiefly used of the occasional twelve-syllabled lines, similar to those just quoted, in the blank verse of Shakespeare and his contemporaries.

Some lines in falling rhythm end in an incomplete foot; that is, the last stressed syllable either ends the line or is followed by fewer unstressed syllables than go to make up the basic foot. Such lines are called catalectic. It is simpler, though not so brief, to describe them as lacking the last syllable, or the last two or three syllables, as the case may be.

Trochaic tetrameter catalectic Róbed in|flámes and|ámber|líght.

Dactylic trimeter catalectic This is a|spráy the bird|clúng to.

Dactylic tetrameter catalectic

Júst for a|handful of|sílver he|léft us.

Bídding the|cróp-headed|Párliament|swíng.

Double-trochaic trimeter catalectic

Jóy among the|méadows like a|trée.

As already indicated (under Basic Feet), when a poem is composed for the most part in a falling rhythm, it is convenient to regard the other lines as of the same kind, with one or more unstressed syllables prefixed. This prefixing of unstressed syllables is called anacrusis. The second line of each of the last three examples under Basic Feet will serve to illustrate anacrusis, if the first line be

regarded as giving the basic rhythm. Similarly, when a poem is composed for the most part in a rising rhythm it is convenient to regard the other lines as of the same kind, with one or more initial unstressed syllables lacking. In Chaucer and in Shakespeare, a few lines lacking the initial unstressed syllable occur among iambic pentameters, but this type of line is now avoided.

Substitutions

The variations and departures from the basic rhythm, apart from those discussed under Excess and Defect, are conveniently described as substitutions. For example the iambic pentameter,

Swift as|a shád|ow, shórt|as án|y dréam,

in which the first syllable is stressed and the second unstressed, may be described as having a trochee substituted for an iamb in the first place.¹ Similarly the line,

Mét we|on híll,|in dále,|fórest,|or méad,

may be described as having trochees in the first and fourth places. The line,

Down a rocky mountain, buried now and lost,

isolated from its context, seems to be made up of six trochees, the last incomplete, and would be that, if that were the basic rhythm of the poem in which it occurs. But the basic rhythm of the poem, Wordsworth's *Excursion*, is iambic pentameter; hence the line must be a variation of this. It must therefore be read with five stresses,

Down a róck|y móun|tain, búr|ied nów|and lóst,

¹Objection has been raised to this formula. To say, for instance, that the first foot of the above line is a trochee is to imply that when the first line is spoken or read aloud, the group of syllables "swift as" occupies substantially the same amount of time as each of the groups of syllables, taken two and two, that follow it. Metrists with an accurate sense of time deny this, maintaining that, instead, the group "swift as a" occupies substantially the same time as the groups "shadow," "short as," and "any." They consequently prefer a division of the line and a nomenclature which will convey this implication and not the former one. The writer has adhered to the old usage as a matter of custom and convenience.

with an anapest substituted for the first iamb of the basic metre.

In Shakespeare's blank verse, particularly when the line is divided between two speakers, an extra unstressed syllable occasionally appears at the beginning of a fresh sentence after the caesura:

And then we will deliver you the cause
Why I, that did love Caesar when I struck him,
Have thus proceeded.

Antony.

I doubt not of your wisdom.

(Julius Caesar III. i. 181-183)

Under the same conditions a syllable may be missing, even in a position calling for a stress. This is to be explained as compensated for by a pause. In some passages, however, the irregularity was probably caused by the cutting out of one or two more intervening speeches or parts of speeches.

Hail, brave friend!

Say to the king the knowledge of the broil,
As thou didst leave it.

Soldier.

() Doubtful it stood,

As two spent swimmers that do cling together
And choke their art.

(Macbeth I. ii. 5-9)

To describe other common variations in iambic and trochaic verse, it is convenient to recognize two additional feet, occurring only as substitutes, the pyrrhic and the spondee. The pyrrhic consists of two unstressed syllables; the spondee of two stressed syllables.

Thus the line,

Chánting|córd hýmns|tǒ thě|córd, frúit|less móon,

may be described as containing four substitutions; a trochee in the first place, spondees in the second and fourth, and a pyrrhic in the third.

Feet of two syllables are common as substitutes in the corresponding three-syllabled rhythms; iambs for anapests, and trochees for dactyls. In the line,

I have félt|with my ná|tive lánd,|I am óne|with my kínd,
 the basic metre is anapestic pentameter, but an iamb is substituted for an anapest in the third place.

Rhythms based on quadrisyllabic feet may be varied (1) by extra unstressed syllables at the beginning or end of the line; (2) by leaving the last foot incomplete (catalectic line); (3) by prolonging the first stressed syllable of a foot so that it takes the time of two syllables; (4) by prolonging two successive syllables so that they take the place of a double trochee; (5) by a pause within the line, so that the first half ends in an incomplete foot. Illustrations are here given from the stanza quoted in Chapter I, and from the opening lines of Meredith's *Love in the Valley*. All the lines quoted are catalectic. The numerals to the right of each line indicate the other variations, as enumerated above.

To the stránd of the Dáughters of the Súnset,	(1,3)
The Ápple-tree, the sínning and the góld;	(1)
Where the máriner must stáy him from his ónset,	(1)
And the réd wave is tránquil as of óld.	(1,3)
Únder yonder béech-tree, sínple on the gréensward,	(4)
Cóuched with her árms () be hínd her golden héad,	(3,5)
Knées and tresses fólded to slíp and ripple ídly,	(3)
Líes my yóung love sléeping in the sháde.	(4,4)

It is clear that when, in the manner so far laid down, we describe the rhythm of a line, we are doing so only in a rough way. We have distinguished only two (in four-syllabled feet three) degrees of stress, and have specified simply an approximate equality of time for the groups of syllables called feet. The more delicate differences of stress, the rate of utterance, the variations in the rate, the length of the pauses, these and many other details have been left undiscussed. Such scansion as has so far been laid down has thus left much to the reader's own judgment. But more than this, it may be conceded that there is frequently room for differences of opinion regard-

ing even the points that have been treated. There is often more than one way of reading a sentence, even in prose. If the sentence occurs in a poem, and we are conscious of a basic rhythm to which it must be accommodated, individual judgments may differ as to the degree to which it should be made to conform. Thus one reader may pass lightly over a pair of syllables, treating them as a pyrrhic, whereas another may give the second syllable a slight metrical stress, treating the pair as an iamb. A similar disagreement might arise over a possible spondee. Any half dozen consecutive lines of blank verse will probably afford examples. The reader may also sometimes be uncertain, when two-syllabled and three-syllabled feet are freely interchanged, which should be regarded as basic. If in his judgment neither distinctly predominates over the other, he may take his choice. The question is not worth long pondering. The important thing is that he should recognize the rhythm and be able to describe it in some intelligible way.

Certain apparent irregularities may conveniently be discussed under this heading. When no consonant separates the vowels of the consecutive syllables, and the first of these is unstressed, the two syllables may be merged in pronunciation so as to be metrically one. This is called elision. It may occur within a word, as in the line,

Stains the white radiance of Eternity,
or between words, as in,

O'er many a frozen, many a fiery Alp.

Elizabethan spellings in common use, like *tharmes* for *the arms* and even *thandes* for *the hands*, show that at one time the *e* of *the* could be absolutely suppressed before vowels. So could the *o* of *to* before the infinitive. The spellings *i'th'* and *o'th'*, used even before words beginning with a consonant, must also have represented actual pronunciation. But when such spellings as *th'offence*

and *t'adore* are found in Milton and later poets, they are probably conventional, and need not be taken to mean that the vowel has disappeared entirely. Indeed, the printed texts of Shakespeare and Milton occasionally replace by an apostrophe a vowel that is required for metrical completeness.

Elision also includes the slighting or suppression of an unstressed vowel before a single consonant, usually *l*, *n*, or *r*, either in a medial syllable, or in some words, as *even* and *heaven*, in a final syllable.

Cheerly rouse the slumbering morn.
Of calling shapes, and beck'ning shadows dire.
Where earth and heaven do make one imagery.

In the versification of Shakespeare the terminations *-tion* and *-ian* are often disyllabic; similarly the word *ocean* may have three syllables. When *l* or *r* is preceded by a consonant and followed by a vowel, as in *sentry*, *warbling*, *disabled*, it may constitute a separate syllable, as if written *sentery*, *warbeling*, *disable-ed*. Words like *fire*, *power*, *prayer* may have two syllables. This last practice still lingers in unlettered verse, but has long since been abandoned by the poets.

The Caesura

The caesura (not always present) is a pause within the line, determined by the phrasing. It may be so marked a pause as to be indicated by a comma or other stop, or it may be simply the slight pause which in deliberate speech is apt to occur between the minor groupings of the words of a sentence. More than one caesura may occur within the line. Of course, where one reader would make only a very slight pause, another might make none at all. With regard to most lines, however, readers are not likely to disagree, either as to the presence of a pause or as to its position.

It is convenient to indicate the caesura by two vertical

lines. When the caesura comes at the end of a foot, in verse in which both feet and caesura are being marked, the vertical line to mark the end of that foot may be omitted.

Examples

Caesura after the second foot

There lies the land: || the vessel puffs her sail.

Caesura within the third foot

By solemn vision, || and bright silver dream.

Caesura after the third foot

Of moving accidents || by flood and field.

Caesura within the fourth foot

In the Parliament of man, || the Federation of the world.

Caesura after the first and third feet

Not I, || but my affairs, || have made you wait.

In the iambic pentameter line the commonest place for the caesura is after the second foot. If this division occurs too regularly, however, the versification tends to become monotonous. Much of the beauty of blank verse depends upon the variation in the position of the caesura. In the polished heroic couplets of Pope and his school, the caesura after the second foot was much affected, as in the familiar passage from *The Rape of The Lock* (II. 7-18):

On her white breast a sparkling cross she wore,
Which Jews might kiss, and infidels adore.
Her lively looks a sprightly mind disclose,
Quick as her eyes, and as unfixed as those;
Favors to none, to all she smiles extends;
Oft she rejects, but never once offends.
Bright as the sun, her eyes the gazers strike,
And like the sun, they shine on all alike.
Yet graceful ease, and sweetness void of pride,
Might hide her faults, if belles had faults to hide;
If to her share some female errors fall,
Look on her face, and you'll forget 'em all.

Final Stress

In iambic verse, and particularly in unrhymed iambic pentameter (blank verse), a distinction is drawn between

strong, light, and weak endings. These terms are applied only to lines ending in monosyllables and having exactly five feet, that is, not having a feminine ending. Such a line is said to have a strong ending if it ends in a word naturally stressed in the sentence; a light ending, if it ends in a word capable of bearing only a slight metrical stress; a weak ending, if it ends in a word wholly incapable of bearing stress, such as *and*, *for*, *or*, connected without pause with the beginning of the next line.

Examples

Strong ending	How sweet the moonlight sleeps upon this <i>bank!</i>
Light ending	Be pilot to me, and thy places <i>shall</i> Still neighbor mine.
Weak ending	Which else had put you to your fortune <i>and</i> The hazard of much blood.

It is clear that blank verse with strong endings only would tend to stiffness, and that blank verse with a high proportion of light and weak endings would tend to resemble rhythmical prose, inasmuch as in passages where they were frequent the line division would be largely artificial.

Final Pause

Lines may be distinguished as end-stopped and run-on. An end-stopped line is one which is followed by a natural pause determined by the sense. A run-on line is one which is not followed by a pause determined by the sense. Ordinarily the presence or absence of a mark of punctuation is a sufficient test. All lines with weak or light endings are run-on.

The reader will note that the last three points discussed, namely, Caesura, Final Stress, and Final Pause, are closely interrelated. In the discussion of blank verse in Chapter V, they will be brought up again, and treated in more detail.

CHAPTER IV

RHYME

Rhyme is agreement in the terminal sounds of two or more words, namely, in the last accented vowel and the sounds following, if there be any, while the sounds preceding are different (*Century Dictionary*). Rhymes which fulfill this definition may be called normal rhymes. Examples are *I-by-vie*; *clear-fear-hear*; *compel-tell-well*; *broken-spoken-token*; *piety-society-variety*. These examples include monosyllabic, disyllabic, and trisyllabic rhymes.

One class of rhymes excluded by the definition above is that known in French as *rimes riches*, in which the agreement between the words includes one or more consonants preceding the vowel, as *loom-bloom*; *friend-trend*; *light-delight*; *fore-four*. The first two of these are unexceptionable. The third would be avoided by most poets. The last, though of a type common in Chaucer, would nowadays be considered in English not a rhyme but an identity.

With the gradual change of pronunciation, many pairs of words that formerly rhymed no longer do so. The reader must not be surprised to find in poets of the eighteenth century and earlier such rhymes as *ought-fault* (formerly with silent *l*); *line-join*; *art-desert* (verb). Some old rhyming pairs of this class, no longer exact, have been retained or revived under literary influence, as *love-prove*; *death-beneath*; *was-grass*. The practice of rhyming words like *victory*, *hastily*, and *loyalty* both with words like *lie* and with words like *be* goes back further than the Elizabethan period.

Rhyme is a matter of pronunciation, not of spelling. A rhyme is imperfect if there is any difference in the sound

of the vowels or of the consonants that follow them. Yet, partly because of that scarcity of rhymes upon which Chaucer was perhaps not the first to comment, and because of the persuasive force of the written form, imperfect rhymes have often passed muster when the words were spelled in like manner. Thus Wordsworth rhymes *moor* and *door* (*Lucy Gray*), and few poets have ventured to rhyme *war* except with such words as *far*, *mar*, *star*, etc., which are really pronounced with a different vowel. In *The Traveller* Goldsmith rhymes *warm* with *form*, according to the pronunciation; in *The Deserted Village* he rhymes *warms* with *arms*, according to the spelling.

The inexact rhyming of vowels is much more tolerable when the consonants that follow are capable of prolongation, as *r*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *v*, *th*, or at least are voiced, as *d* (*wood-brood*; *spread-displayed*). Rhymes in which the terminal consonants do not match exactly are altogether unallowable, except those of the type *breathe-death*; *is-this*, in which the consonants are spirants, the one voiced, the other unvoiced, but otherwise alike.

A striking series of imperfect rhymes, which seem to fit perfectly the antique theme of the poem in which they occur, are those in Rossetti's translation from Villon, *The Ballade of Dead Ladies*:

Tell me now in what hidden way is
Lady Flora, the lovely Roman.
Where's Hipparchia and where is Thais,
Neither of them the fairer woman?
Where is Echo, beheld of no man,
Only heard on river and mere,—
She whose beauty was more than human? . . .
But where the snows of yester-year?

Words like *flower*, *power*, *tower* are in verse monosyllabic, and rhyme perfectly with *hour*. *Wind* (noun) rhymes with *find*, and *wound* with *sound*. *Again* rhymes with *main*.

Rhymes are occasionally found, as if by accident, in

blank verse, though as a rule they are carefully avoided. Two examples may be quoted:

'First spoke the lady, last the cavalier!'

—I say, why should the man tell truth right here,
When graceful lying finds such ready shift?

(Browning, *The Ring and the Book* III. 937-939)

The stillness of the dead world's winter dawn

Amazed him, and he groan'd, 'The King is gone.'

(Tennyson, *The Passing of Arthur*)

Rhyming passages are frequent in the early plays of Shakespeare, and scenes are often concluded with a couplet or two, even where all the rest of the dialogue has been unrhymed.

Trisyllabic rhymes normally imply dactylic or anapestic metre, and hence are rarely found outside of lyrical or humorous verse. Hood's *Bridge of Sighs* is unusual as a poem in deeply serious tone with trisyllabic rhymes.

The double and triple rhymes that lie readiest to hand are those between words formed with the same suffixes, as *waking-breaking; nearer-clearer; taken-forsaken; fearfully-tearfully; magical-tragical*. The objection to this method of obtaining rhymes is that it makes the rhyming lines invariably end with the same part of speech. This hardly matters when the rhymes are triple ("The remarkable thing is not that it is done well, but that it is done at all"), but is soon felt to be objectionable if they are double—as, indeed, it is when they are monosyllabic. Variety must be obtained by at least occasional rhymes that are not grammatically equivalent.

Combinations of more than one word are often used to form double and triple rhymes, as *chorus-before us; tells me-compels me; where it is-fair it is*. Compounded rhymes oddly matched, in sense or sound or both, have been abundantly used for humorous or grotesque effect, as by Byron in *Beppo* and *Don Juan*, by Lowell in *A*

Fable for Critics, and by Browning in *The Flight of the Duchess*.

When kneeling on the shore upon her sad knee,
He left this Adriatic Ariadne.

Unqualified merits, I'll grant, if you choose, he has 'em,
But he lacks the one merit of kindling enthusiasm.

And then, when red doth the sword of our Duke rust,
And its leathern sheath lies o'ergrown with a blue crust,
Then shall I scrape together my earnings.

It is desirable that rhymes which come next to each other should differ both in the vowels and in the following consonants. A succession of rhymes like *night-hide-light-wide* affects the ear unpleasantly. A short search will convince the reader that the poets have usually observed this principle.

A peculiar type of faulty rhyme is that in which one of the rhyming syllables is in the position following the stress. A number of rhymes of this kind have been pointed out in Shelley. One occurs in a well known passage of Shakespeare:

Quite over-canopied with luscious woodbine,
With sweet musk-roses, and with eglantine.

(*Midsummer Night's Dream* II. i. 251-252)

According to their arrangement, rhymes are described as in couplets, in triplets, alternate, or inverse. These arrangements may be indicated by the notations *aabbcc*, *aaa bbb*, *abab*, *abba*.

Rhyme tends to emphasize the words that carry it. When both words of a rhyming pair bear logical stress, the stress is considerably reinforced by the rhyme, especially if the lines form a couplet. Hence the suitability of the heroic couplet, as written by Dryden, Pope, and Goldsmith, for pointed, antithetical statement:

Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;

A breath can make them, as a breath has made:
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed, can never be supplied.

(Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village* 51-56)

A few words may be added on the history of rhyme in English. Rhyme occurs as an ornament or a form of word-play in a few Old English poems. The earliest English poem rhymed throughout in the modern manner dates from about 1200. From then on, owing to French influence, supplemented by that of mediaeval Latin, it was more and more used, though unrhymed verse, based on alliteration, continued to be written till about 1400. Rhyme then had the field to itself until Surrey composed in blank verse a translation of four books of the *Aeneid*, first printed in 1557, ten years after his death. For the later use of rhymed and unrhymed verse, see Chapters II and V.

CHAPTER V

THE CHIEF METRES OF ENGLISH VERSE

In this chapter will be described a number of the regular metrical forms that have been most widely used in English. They will be grouped under the headings of continuous metres and stanzas.

By a continuous metre is meant one in which the lines are formed upon a single metrical pattern, and are not grouped into stanzas. Some continuous metres are unrhymed; others rhyme in couplets.

A stanza is typically a group of lines, usually at least four, which is constructed according to a recurring pattern and which forms an integral part of the poem. Exceptionally, a poem may consist of a single stanza; that is, it may consist of only a few lines, forming a familiar metrical pattern, as Landor's quatrain,

I strove with none, for none was worth my strife.
Nature I loved and, after Nature, Art;
I warmed both hands before the fire of life;
It sinks, and I am ready to depart.

By an extension of the term, irregular groups of lines, such as those of Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*, are often spoken of as stanzas, though it would be better to call them strophes.

Continuous Metres

Iambic Tetrameter Couplet

This metre was introduced into English in the thirteenth century by writers who were familiar with its use in contemporary French poetry. Chaucer used it in *The Book of the Duchess* and *The House of Fame*. Milton's *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are in part written in this measure. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, Scott revived its use

or long narrative poems, in *The Lay of the Last Minstrel* and other poems, and was followed by Byron in *The Giaour*.

The fault of this metre is its monotony, and what Byron called its "fatal facility." Both Scott and Byron from the beginning varied it by occasional alternate and inverse rhymes and by introducing passages in other metres. Since their time it has been little used except for short descriptive or lyrical poems.

Then would he sing achievements high,
And circumstance of chivalry,
Till the rapt traveller would stay,
Forgetful of the closing day;
And noble youths, the strain to hear,
Forgot the hunting of the deer;
And Yarrow, as he roll'd along,
Bore burden to the Minstrel's song.

(*Lay of the Last Minstrel* VI. xxxi. 34-41)

Trochaic Tetrameter Couplet

This metre is that used by Shakespeare for the charms uttered by the fairies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and for many of the speeches of the witches in *Macbeth*. Parts of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* are in this metre. Keats used it in a number of odes. The lines are usually catalectic. Lines of iambic tetrameter are often freely introduced, singly, in couplets, or in passages of some length.

Haste thee, nymph, and bring with thee
Jest and youthful Jollity,
Quips and cranks and wanton wiles,
Nods and becks and wreathed smiles,
Such as hang on Hebe's cheek,
And love to live in dimple sleek;
Sport that wrinkled Care derides,
And Laughter holding both his sides.

(*L'Allegro* 25-32)

Iambic Pentameter Couplet (Heroic Couplet)

The earliest poem in this metre is Chaucer's *Legend of Good Women*. The greater part of *The Canterbury Tales*,

including the *Prologue*, is in this measure. In the Elizabethan period it was used by Marlowe in his *Hero and Leander*, and regularly by the writers of satire. In the Restoration period it was for a short time popular on the stage in the "heroic plays" of Dryden and others. Dryden also used it for his satires and theological poems. In the Queen Anne period it was brought to what was regarded as perfection by Pope, in *The Rape of the Lock*, the *Satires*, the *Essay on Man*, and the translation of the *Iliad*, this perfection consisting in remarkable smoothness and regularity, and in such an arrangement of the ideas that each line tended to be a complete member of the sentence, with each couplet bringing the sense to a conclusion. This was called the "closed couplet." Pope, indeed, had trained himself to think in lines and couplets. The passage quoted in the preceding chapter will serve as an illustration.

Pope's versification was long regarded as a model, and is imitated by Byron in *The Corsair*. Keats, in *Sleep and Poetry*, referred to Pope's couplet as a "rocking-horse," and in *Endymion* took pains to keep the metrical structure and the sentence structure apart. In one passage (II. 317-330), he defies the tradition of the closed couplet by grouping the lines in pairs contrary to the rhyme. Wordsworth chose the heroic couplet for *The Happy Warrior* as the traditional measure for character-description and ethical reflection.

Blank Verse

Blank verse is iambic pentameter unrhymed. As already stated, it was first used in English by the Earl of Surrey in the reign of Henry VIII. The first drama in blank verse was Sackville and Norton's *Gorboduc*, performed in 1561 before Queen Elizabeth. These earliest writers of blank verse, like Milton later, were probably influenced both by the recent use of unrhymed verse in Italian and by the feeling that if English poetry was to

attain to equal dignity with that of Greece and Rome, it should similarly be without rhyme.

The first drama in blank verse written for the public stage was Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, acted about 1587¹. Before Marlowe showed its possibilities, English blank verse has been mostly limping and awkward, and at best a succession of monotonously regular lines, which read as if composed one by one in fulfillment of a task. Marlowe was the first to make the rhythm of blank verse conform to the thought and feeling. In *Tamburlaine*, the lines are prevalingly end-stopped:

Our souls, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering planet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And always moving as the restless spheres,
Will us to wear ourselves and never rest
Until we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect bliss and sole felicity,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crown.

(Part the First, II. vii. 21-29)

But in *Dr. Faustus* the metre is handled with the utmost freedom (scene xvi):

Ah, Faustus,
Now hast thou but one bare hour to live,
And then must thou be damned perpetually!
Stand still, you ever-moving spheres of heaven,
That time may cease, and midnight never come;
Fair Nature's eye, rise, rise again, and make
Perpetual day; or let this hour be but
A year, a week, a month, a natural day,
That Faustus may repent and save his soul!
O lente, lente currite, noctis equi!
The stars move still, time runs, the clock will strike,
The devil will come and Faustus will be damned.
O, I'll leap up to my God!—Who pulls me down?—
See, see, where Christ's blood streams in the firmament!
One drop would save my soul, half a drop; ah, my Christ!—

¹A rival claim is that of Kyd's *Spanish Tragedy*, greatly inferior in its versification, which may have been acted a little earlier than *Tamburlaine*.

Ah, rend not my heart for naming of my Christ!
Yet will I call on Him: O, spare me, Lucifer!

With Marlowe showing the way, blank verse became the established medium of drama, though prose was used in some parts of the dialogue. Shakespeare at first used prose chiefly for matter-of-fact or humorous passages, especially in dialogue in which humble or ludicrous characters took part, but he came to use it also, as in *Much Ado About Nothing* and *As You Like It*, for the polished and witty language of ladies and courtiers who cultivated conversation as a fine art. Between 1660 and 1680, to use round numbers, the supremacy of blank verse on the stage was threatened by the heroic couplet. In the course of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the place of blank verse in drama was gradually usurped by prose.

Milton wrote *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* in blank verse of unsurpassed power and strongly individual character. For some time after this, the customary metre for non-dramatic poems of any length was the heroic couplet. Thomson's *Seasons* and Cowper's *Task* brought blank verse again into favor. Shortly before 1800, Coleridge composed a few short pieces in blank verse of exceptional delicacy and beauty. In the nineteenth century the most distinctive blank verse was that of Wordsworth, Shelley, Keats, Tennyson, and Browning.

The blank verse of any great poet is as individual as his thought and diction, if only because these are perfectly embodied in it. While the varieties are thus in theory endless, it is useful to distinguish three main types, which it is simplest to call the first, second, and third; the first, formal and regular, the third boldly varied, and the second intermediate. It will be understood that each of these types allows of a considerable range of difference.

The first type is that in which the lines are largely end-stopped, with few departures from the basic rhythm, either in the number of syllables or in the position of the

accents. What variation occurs in individual lines appears to be undesigned, and arises out of the grouping of syllables into words, the position of the caesura, and the occasional use of a trochee in the first place. It may be illustrated by a passage from *Gorboduc* (V. ii. 183-191):

The royal king and all his sons are slain;
No ruler rests within the regal seat;
The heir to whom the sceptre longs, unknown;
That to each force of foreign princes' power,
Whom vantage of our wretched state may move
By sudden arms to gain so rich a realm,
And to the proud and greedy mind at home
Whom blinded lust to reign leads to aspire,
Lo, Britain realm is left an open prey.

In the second type, the rhythm is no longer dominated by the metrical scheme. Run-on lines are numerous, but the line-divisions do not separate words which form part of the same phrase. Trochees and spondees are freely substituted for iambs, and the position of the caesura varies greatly. The lines are felt to be not similar units, but component parts of a larger rhythmical structure. This type, in its perfection, may be illustrated by a passage from *Paradise Lost* (IV. 720-725):

Thus at their shady lodge arriv'd, both stood,
Both turn'd, and under open sky ador'd
The God that made both sky, air, earth, and heaven
Which they beheld, the moon's resplendent globe,
And starry pole: Thou also mad'st the night,
Maker Omnipotent, and Thou the day.

In the third type the metrical scheme is treated with still greater freedom. End-stopped lines become exceptional, so that line-division and sentence structure are in almost continual conflict. Light and weak endings are numerous. Extra syllables are freely introduced, both within the line, and at the end. Few lines preserve the basic rhythm without marked deviation. Verse of this type may resemble rhythmical prose, or may reproduce

closely the rhythms of unstudied speech. To this type belongs the passage from Marlowe's *Faustus*, quoted above. It appears constantly in Shakespeare's latest plays, and more recently, in the blank verse of Browning.

Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation, and
The testimony on my part no other
But what comes from myself, it shall scarce boot me
To say, 'Not guilty'; mine integrity,
Being counted falsehood, shall, as I express it,
Be so receiv'd. But thus: if powers divine
Behold our human actions, as they do,
I doubt not then but innocence shall make
False accusation blush, and tyranny
Tremble at patience.

(*The Winter's Tale* III. 21-31)

God's works—paint any one, and count it crime
To let a truth slip. Don't object, "His works
Are here already; nature is complete:
Suppose you reproduce her—(which you can't)
There's no advantage! you must beat her, then."
For, don't you mark? we're made so that we love
First when we see them painted, things we have passed
Perhaps a hundred times, nor cared to see;
And so they are better, painted—better to us,
Which is the same thing.

(*Fra Lippo Lippi* 291-300)

To assign a given piece of blank verse to the type it most closely resembles will be at least a step toward appreciating its metrical qualities.

The blank verse of Shakespeare shows a gradual progress from the first type, as in *Richard III*, through the second, as in *Julius Caesar*, to the third, as in *Macbeth* and later plays. This statement will not be borne out by every speech in a given play; it simply indicates the general tendency. It implies that Shakespeare began by careful conformity to metrical pattern, that he then brought expression and metrical pattern into perfect balance, neither dominating the other, and that later he made

metrical pattern conform to the demands of expression. His verse, that is, took on more and more the accents of actual speech.

It may be noted that the examples of the third type of blank verse are taken from a play of Shakespeare and a dramatic monologue of Browning: that is, both represent actual speech. For that purpose, this type, if not exaggerated, is suitable. Except for that purpose, the ideal form of blank verse is the second type, disciplined yet not mechanically exact, flowing and varied yet continually returning to the basic rhythm.

Dactylic Hexameter

The English dactylic hexameter is an imitation, in accentual verse, of a classical metre in quantitative verse, that of the *Iliad*, the *Odyssey*, and the *Aeneid*. A few disregarded experiments in this metre were made in the Elizabethan period. Southey reintroduced it in his *Vision of Judgment*, and was ridiculed for this by Byron. Longfellow's *Evangeline* has been the most widely read of later poems in this measure.

According to classical rule, the first four feet were either dactyls or spondees, the fifth was almost invariably a dactyl, and the sixth a spondee. For the most part, the writers of English hexameters have not attempted to imitate this use of spondees, but have composed their lines of dactyls and trochees.

Now from the country round, from the farms and neighboring hamlets,

Came in their holiday dresses the blithe Acadian peasants.

Many a glad good-morrow and jocund laugh from the young folk
Made the bright air brighter, as up from the numerous meadows,
Where no path could be seen but the track of wheels on the green-sward,

Group after group appeared, and joined, or passed on the highway.

(*Evangeline* I. 368-373)

Terza Rima

Terza rima is the metre of Dante's *Divina Commedia*. It consists of iambic pentameter lines, grouped in threes, rhyming *aba bcb cdc ded*, etc., with a final line completing the rhyme. The form thus lies between continuous and stanzaic metre.

Shelley used this metre in *Prince Athanase*, *The Triumph of Life*, and *The Woodman and the Nightingale*, and in a modified form in the *Ode to the West Wind*. Browning followed its rhyme-scheme in *The Statue and the Bust*.

Then said my guide, "Turn round; what dost thou here?
See Farinata, risen now upright;
Above the girdle thou shalt see him clear."
Already I had fixed on him my sight,
And he surged upward with his breast and head,
As if he held all hell in great despite.
My leader's quick, bold hands urged me to tread
Among the sepulchres to where his lay,
Saying, "See that thy words be numbered."
When to his tomb's foot I had made my way,
He gazed on me a little, then, in scorn,
"Who were thine ancestors?" I heard him say.
(*Inferno* X. 31-43; translated by M. J. Hubert)

Stanzas

A stanza is described by giving the number of lines, the metrical description of each line, and the arrangement of the rhymes. Thus the stanza of Keat's *Ode to the Nightingale* consists of ten lines, all iambic pentameter except the eighth, which is iambic trimeter, and rhyming *ababcdecde*. If certain lines of a stanza always have internal rhyme, or always have feminine endings, or are always catalectic, or show any other constant variation from the basic rhythm, or if there is a refrain, this should be noted.

The number of possible stanzas is practically unlimited. Here will be described only a few of those which have been most widely used.

The Ballad Stanza

The stanza commonly, but not exclusively, used in the old ballads is of four lines, the first and third iambic tetrameter, the second and fourth iambic trimeter. In the ballads, as a rule, the rhythm is freely treated, and only the second and fourth lines rhyme.

There lived a wife at Usher's Well,
And a wealthy wife was she;
She had three stout and stalwart sons,
And sent them o'er the sea.

(*The Wife of Usher's Well* 1-4)

In literary verse, this stanza occurs with the single pair of rhymes, as in the ballads, and with alternate rhyme. An eight-line stanza, on the same plan, is also often used, as in Lovelace's *To Althea from Prison*.

Iambic Tetrameter Quatrains

Four-line stanzas of iambic tetrameter are often used, rhyming in couplets, alternately, or inversely. The last form, though occasionally employed by poets before Tennyson, is best known as the stanza of *In Memoriam*.

The hills are shadows, and they flow
From form to form, and nothing stands;
They melt like mist, the solid lands,
Like clouds they shape themselves and go.

(*In Memoriam* cxxiii. 5-9)

Iambic Pentameter Quatrains

The four-line stanza of iambic pentameter usually has alternate rhyme, as in Gray's *Elegy* and in Wordsworth's *Peele Castle*.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike the inevitable hour—
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

(*Elegy* 33-36)

In *A Dream of Fair Women*, Tennyson has altered this stanza by making the fourth line iambic trimeter. The

natural tendency in reading such a stanza aloud is to read the fourth line more slowly than the others, in order to make it balance them in sound. This slow reading is in keeping with the dignity and pathos of the stories presented in the poem.

Ottava Rima

This stanza, of Italian origin, is of eight lines of iambic pentameter, rhyming *abababcc*. Its first literary use was by Boccaccio. From this time, it has been the customary stanza of narrative poetry in Italian, being used by Ariosto and Tasso in their great epics, as well as by poets of less eminence.

Wyatt, who introduced the sonnet into English, also introduced this stanza, which was used by some of the Elizabethan poets. In the nineteenth century John Hookham Frere wrote in ottava rima a burlesque epic, *The Monks and the Giants*, "by William and Robert Whistlercraft," which suggested to Byron the use of the stanza in *Beppo* and *Don Juan*, though Byron was already acquainted with the Italian comic-romantic poets who had served as Frere's models. Keat's *Isabella* was begun before the publication of *Beppo*, but published later (1829).

Byron made this stanza so distinctly his own that it has rarely been attempted since. The great difficulties of the stanza, as a medium for narrative, are the continual need of finding rhymes in groups of three, and the way in which the final couplet seems to bring the sense to a halt with each stanza. Long passages in the story of Haidee show that Byron found these difficulties not insurmountable. To his particular vein of humorous narrative and rambling satire the stanza was admirably suited. Grotesque rhymes like *Spaniard-tan-yard-man yard* were all the more ludicrous for coming in threes, and the final couplet could be utilized for ending the stanza with a sudden epigrammatic turn.

He entered in his house, no more his home,
 A thing to human feelings the most trying,
 And harder for the heart to overcome,
 Perhaps, than even the mental pangs of dying;
 To find our hearthstone turned into a tomb,
 And round its once warm precincts palely lying
 The ashes of our hopes, is a deep grief,
 Beyond a single gentleman's belief.

(*Don Juan* III. li)

The Spenserian Stanza

The Spenserian stanza, invented by Edmund Spenser for *The Faerie Queene* (first three books published in 1590), has nine lines, the first eight iambic pentameter and the ninth iambic hexameter (Alexandrine), rhyming *ab-abbcbcc*. He apparently formed it by adding a ninth line to the stanza, of French origin, used by Chaucer in *The Monk's Tale*. The stanza thus devised was, if only for its length, more suitable for Spenser's leisurely-flowing and richly ornamented narrative than the ottava rima would have been. Further the arrangement of the rhymes is less suggestive of a formal balance of clauses. By varying the grouping of the lines and the position of the pauses, Spenser gives the stanza a continual variety.

The stanza was revived, toward the middle of the eighteenth century, by poets who sought to recapture the spirit of Spenser as well as his outward form. From their example it was used by Burns in *The Cotter's Saturday Night* and by Byron in *Childe Harold*. Shelley used it in *The Revolt of Islam*, perhaps prompted by Byron's example, and in *Adonais*. Keats, a professed disciple of Spenser, used it in *The Eve of St. Agnes*.

A casement high and triple-arch'd there was,
 All garlanded with carven imag'ries
 Of fruits, of flowers, and bunches of knot-grass,
 And diamonded with panes of quaint device,
 Innumerable with stains of splendid dyes,
 As are the tiger-moth's deep-damask'd wings;

And in its midst, 'mong thousand heraldries,
And twilight saints, and deep emblazonings,
A shielded scutcheon blush'd with blood of queens and
kings.

(*The Eve of St. Agnes*, stanza xxiv)

The Pindaric Ode

A number of the odes of Pindar, one of the famous lyric poets of ancient Greece, are constructed on the following plan. The number of stanzas, to use the modern term, is a multiple of three; in each group of three, the first two, called strophe and antistrophe, are of some one pattern; the third, called epode, is of a different pattern. These two patterns are adhered to throughout the poem. Ben Jonson composed an ode in this form, and Gray adopted it in *The Bard* and *The Progress of Poesy*. In Pindar's odes this elaborate correspondence was justified and revealed by the musical setting; in Gray's odes it becomes a piece of intellectual ingenuity, which has probably escaped the notice of many of his readers.

The Sonnet

The sonnet originated in Italy, in the thirteenth century. It was first used as a stanza in lyric poetry, but single sonnets soon came to be written as independent poems. The sonnets in which Petrarch (d. 1374) celebrated the beauty and virtues of Laura became famous throughout western Europe. From one of them Chaucer took the material for three stanzas of his *Troilus and Cressida*.

As employed by Petrarch, the sonnet consists of fourteen lines of iambic pentameter. These lines form two groups, the octave, of two quatrains, rhyming *abba abba*, and the sestet, of two tercets, rhyming *cde cde* or *cdc dcd*. Occasionally the rhymes of the sestet are further varied.

The sonnet was introduced into English by Sir Thomas Wyatt, in the reign of Henry VIII. He followed the Italian arrangement of rhymes in the octave, but continued

cddcee. His friend the Earl of Surrey made an innovation by writing sonnets consisting of three quatrains and a final couplet: *abab cdcd efef gg*. This form has come to be known as the Shakespearean sonnet.

Practically every poet of the Elizabethan age wrote sonnets. Sir Philip Sidney, in his series of sonnets called *Astrophel and Stella*, commonly follows the order *abba abba cdc dee*, and observes the divisions into quatrains and tercets. Shakespeare's sonnets follow the common Elizabethan practice, rhyming like those of Surrey.

Milton's sonnets, written after the form had passed out of general favor, rhyme after the Italian model, but in more than half of them he avoids making a pause in the sense at the end of the eighth line.

After Milton, the sonnet was neglected until it was restored to English by the "romantic" poets of the eighteenth century. The way was thus paved for Wordsworth, whose greatest sonnets rival those of Milton as expressions of deep moral and patriotic feeling. Wordsworth follows the Italian order of rhymes, with occasional liberties, and usually observes the division into two parts. Keats, Matthew Arnold, Mrs. Browning, and Rossetti may be named among those who have written sonnets of high rank.

The popularity of the sonnet during many centuries and its use by great poets from Dante onward are evidence of its merits as a metrical invention. Its most apparent features are its brevity, its subdivisions, the continuity within the octave and within the sestet, caused by the carrying over of the rhymes, and the musical quality caused by the repetition of the rhymes.

The form is long enough to allow the development of a poetic idea, but not so long as to tempt the poet into digressions. Wordsworth declared that the excellence of the sonnet seemed to him to consist mainly in the pervading sense of intense unity.

In so brief a form it is natural to expect perfection of

detail throughout. There should be nowhere any weakness of thought or expression. In particular, the first and last lines are for obvious reasons those in which strongly marked rhythm and memorable diction are called for.

Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee.
They also serve who only stand and wait.

The subdivisions may be utilized to give the composition an architectural symmetry, if the poet desires. In some sonnets, as in Wordsworth's *Composed Upon Westminster Bridge*, they are virtually disregarded, in the interest of "intense unity." Usually, the division into octave and sestet is made significant. The two parts stand in some such relation as that of contrast, of simile, of question and answer, of situation and comment, of statement and justification. The quatrains are also often made distinct parts in the development of the octave. The subdivision of the sestet into two members is less commonly observed.

As an example of a sonnet in which all the divisions are observed, one of Wordsworth's (*Miscellaneous Sonnets* III, xxvii) may be quoted.

A POET!—He hath put his heart to school,
Nor dares to move unpropped upon the staff
Which Art hath placed within his hand—must laugh
By precept only, and shed tears by rule.

Thy Art be Nature; the live current quaff,
And let the groveller sip his stagnant pool,
In fear that else, when Critics grave and cool
Have killed him, Scorn should write his epitaph.

How does the Meadow-flower its bloom unfold?
Because the lovely little flower is free
Down to its root, and, in that freedom, bold;

And so the grandeur of the Forest-tree
Comes not by casting in a formal mould,
But from its *own* divine vitality.

The octave, as a whole, bids the poet discard art for nature. The first quatrain describes the poet as he timidly adheres

to rules; the second bids him drink of the living stream. The sestet gives two analogues in justification: the first tercet, that of the meadow flower; the second, that of the forest tree. The relation between octave and sestet is that of two members of a simile.

CHAPTER VI

RELATIONS BETWEEN SOUND AND SENSE

For the purpose of analysis, rhythm and harmony have been discussed as independent elements of verse, and as if they existed apart from the content. As already indicated, however, they are bound up with it and to a considerable degree dependent upon it. The line and stanza, similarly, have been discussed chiefly, though not exclusively, as metrical patterns, apart from the content. Yet it seems clear that the content must to some degree determine the form. We cannot imagine *Paradise Lost* in the metre of *Marmion*, or *The Faerie Queene* in the heroic couplet. The study of verse must therefore include some study of the relation between the form of the verse and its content.

The stanzas of a short poem often have a significance like that of the cantos or parts of a long poem. Thus a poem of two or three stanzas is almost certain to have a twofold or threefold division of the thought. If it has not, it would be better to run the stanzas together without division. Familiar poems in which the stanzas are clearly significant in this way are Wordsworth's "A slumber did my spirit seal" (two stanzas), Masfield's *Cargoes* (three), Wordsworth's *Solitary Reaper* (four), Shelley's *Ode to the West Wind* (five). Keats's *Belle Dame Sans Merci* consists of twelve stanzas, which form four groups of three each, indicated by the resemblances and differences of the first lines. An ingenious use of the stanza to produce a contrary effect occurs in two of Browning's poems, *Johannes Agricola in Meditation* and *Porphyria's Lover*. These two monologues present the workings of disordered minds. Browning has written them in five-line stanzas, run together as continuous metre, suggesting the way in which

idea follows upon idea without pause or check, coherently and yet abnormally.

The sonnet, if the division into parts is observed, becomes essentially a set of stanzas. The relations between these have been discussed in Chapter V.

The specific suggestions of rhythm and pause are less easy to analyze. In such a line as that of Tennyson,

The sound of many a heavily galloping hoof,

the design to imitate the rhythm of hoof-beats is plain. Compare the catchword of *The Northern Farmer—New Style*,

Proputty, proputty, proputty—canter an' canter awaäy.

Browning's "*How they brought the Good News*" is another poem in which the rhythm simulates galloping:

Not a word to each other; we kept the great pace

Neck by neck, stride by stride, never changing our place.

Of course there is not often occasion for imitation so direct as in these passages, but where action is described, the rhythm may accentuate the impression by its smoothness or by its irregularity.

Line-division and phrasing disagree most strikingly when a single word at the beginning of a line is joined in sense with the line before, or when a new phrase begins with the last word of a line. Hence, a pause thus arising creates unusual emphasis.

The trumpets blew, and then did either side,
They that assailed, and they that held the lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spur, suddenly move,
Meet in the midst, and then so furiously
Shock, that a man far-off might well perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shake, and a low thunder of arms.

(Tennyson, *Lancelot and Elaine* 453-459)

Another exceptional use of pauses is that in Milton's line,

Rocks, caves, lakes, fens, bogs, dens, and shades of death

in which the interruptions to the normal flow of the line emphasize the impression of things desolate and lifeless. These are extreme examples. The treatment of the pause in a number of other passages has already been commented upon in the discussion of blank verse and of the heroic couplet.

Besides rhythm, the sounds of vowels and consonants are often used with imitative or suggestive effect. Tennyson's lines,

The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmuring of innumerable bees,

(*The Princess* vii)

present an intricate sound-pattern of vowels and consonants, selected to suggest the sounds named:

The MOan of dOveS in IMMeMORial eLMS,
And MURMURing of INNuMERaBLE BeeS.

(The *o* of *doves* and the first *e* of *innumerable* are similar to the *u* of *murmuring*.)

English, like other languages, has plenty of words directly imitative of sound: *clash*, *crash*, *splash*; *chirp*, *twitter*; *hiss*, *hush*; *boom*, *hoot*, *roar*. Besides these, there are words like *moan*, *shout*, and *cry*, probably not imitative in their origin, which are equally expressive, and seem equally to imitate the sounds they denote. Even the individual vowels and consonants of all these words seem, for the moment, to have imitative force, and if we wish to emphasize the effect of the word, we incline to use with it others that duplicate these sounds. Hence, such combinations of words as "a loud howl," "wild cries," "a piercing shriek," "the moan of doves in immemorial elms,"

Clang battle-axe, and clash brand! Let the King reign!

Underlying the use of vowel and consonant harmony in verse are the further facts that we tend to establish associations between words that are similar in sound, and that we take a certain pleasure in these associations. The popular use of such expressions as "to have and to hold,"

“sink or swim,” “make or break,” “through thick and thin,” is evidence of this. Also, the association between the sounds of familiar words and their meaning is so immediate that we are apt to think of the meaning as in some way actually contained in the sound, although we know that the connection between sound and meaning is purely a convention. The word *sweet* seems not only to suggest sweetness, but to have sweetness in its sound; the words *rough* and *harsh* seem to be rough and harsh in themselves.

There are also differences in the intrinsic quality of different sounds. Long *o*, *oo*, and *au* are deep and sonorous; short *e* and *i* are relatively thin and weak. Something may be added to the expressiveness of a word when the quality of its principal vowel seems to accord with the meaning; compare the words *noble*, *glorious*, *holy*, *awful*, with *trivial*, *petty*, *fickle*, *miserable*, *silly*. It is not pretended that the sound of the word determines its connotation, but only that by a happy chance the one may reinforce the other. Similarly with consonants. Compared with *l*, *m*, *n*, and *r*, which are almost as resonant as vowels, the unvoiced consonants *k*, *p*, *t*, *f*, *s*, *th*, are hard and harsh; when they come together the combination may be awkward to pronounce. From all these considerations arises the power of vowel and consonant combinations, known in this use as tone color, to sustain and emphasize impressions of physical sensation and of feeling.

On a sudden open fly,
With impetuous recoil and jarring sound,
The infernal doors, and on their hinges grate
Harsh thunder, that the lowest bottom shook
Of Erebus.

(*Paradise Lost* II. 879-883)

Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold.

(*On the Late Massacre in Piedmont* 1-2)

And when they list, their lean and flashy songs
Grate on their scrannel pipes of wretched straw.

(*Lycidas* 123-124)

O holy Hope! and high Humility,
High as the heavens above!
These are your walks, and you have shew'd them me,
To kindle my cold love.

(Vaughan, *Beyond the Veil* 13-16)

And many a nymph who wreathes her brows with sedge
And sheds the freshening dew.

(Collins, *Evening* 25-26)

When France in wrath her giant-limbs upreared.
And with that oath which smote air, earth, and sea
Stamped her strong foot, and said she would be free.
Bear witness for me, how I hoped and feared!

(Coleridge, *France* 22-25)

Bring me my bow of burning gold!
Bring me my arrows of desire!
Bring me my spear! O clouds, unfold!
Bring me my chariot of fire!

(Blake, *Milton*)

On every side
More horribly the multitudinous streams
Of ocean's mountainous waste to mutual war
Rushed in dark tumult thundering, as to mock
The calm and spangled sky.

(Shelley, *Alastor* 340-344)

At the mid hour of night, when stars are weeping, I fly
To the lone vale we loved, when life shone warm in thine eye,
And I think oft, if spirits can steal from the regions of air
To revisit past scenes of delight, thou wilt come to me there
And tell me our love is remember'd, even in the sky

(Moore, *At the mid hour of night* 1-5)

The Sea of Faith
Was once, too, at the full, and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furled.
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,

Retreating, to the breath
Of the night-wind, down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

(Arnold, *Dover Beach* 21-28)

When the hounds of spring are on winter's traces,
The mother of months, in meadow and plain,
Fills the shadows and windy places
With lisp of leaves and ripple of rain.
And the brown bright nightingale amorous
Is half assuaged for Itylus,
The Thracian ships and the foreign faces,
The tongueless vigil, and all the pain.
(Swinburne, *Atalanta in Calydon*)

EXERCISES

I. Describe the following lines with respect to the basic foot and the number of feet:

One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

Farewell, rewards and fairies,
Good housewives now may say.

Music, when soft voices die,
Vibrates in the memory.

Art thou poor, yet hast thou golden slumbers?
O sweet content!

Out of the golden remote wild west where the sea without
shore is,
Full of the sunset, and sad if at all with the fulness of joy.

II. Describe fully, according to the plan given in Chapter III, each line of the following passage:

About him exercised heroic games
Th' unarmed youth of Heav'n; but nigh at hand
Celestial armoury, shields, helms, and spears,
Hung high, with diamond flaming and with gold.
Thither came Uriel, gliding through the even
On a sunbeam, swift as a shooting star
In autumn thwarts the night, when vapors fir'd
Impress the air, and shows the mariner
From what point of his compass to beware
Impetuous winds.

(*Paradise Lost* IV. 551-560)

III. In some collection of poems, as *The Golden Treasury*, find an example of each of the following kinds of line:

Iambic trimeter, tetrameter, pentameter, hexameter;
Iambic trimeter and tetrameter with feminine ending;
Trochaic tetrameter, complete and catalectic;
Anapestic trimeter and tetrameter, without and with feminine ending.

IV. Describe the stanza of the following poems:

Waller, *Go, lovely rose*;

Herrick, *Corinna's Maying, To Daffodils*;

Wordsworth, *The Solitary Reaper, Ode to Duty*;

Shelley, *To a Skylark*;

Keats, *Ode on a Grecian Urn*;

Tennyson, *The Palace of Art*;

Arnold, *The Scholar Gipsy*;

Swinburne, *The Garden of Proserpine*;

Browning, *Love Among the Ruins, Rabbi Ben Ezra, Epilogue to Asolando*;

Kipling, *The Feet of the Young Men, Before a Midnight Breaks in Storm, Recessional*.

V. What changes (rearrangement, omission, addition, or substitution) will make iambic pentameters out of the following lines?

This man resolved not to live but to know.

Let the curtains fall; wheel the sofa round.

True ease in writing comes not from chance, but from art.

The sun is couched, and the sea-fowl have gone to rest.

Colors and words unknown to humanity.

The star which at nightfall comes to shine.

VI. From *Richard III*, *Julius Caesar*, and *The Tempest* select a passage each to illustrate the statement made in Chapter IV regarding the change in Shakespeare's blank verse.

VII. What is the relation between the octave and the sestet in the following sonnets of Wordsworth?

Well may'st thou halt, and turn with brightening eye (*Misc. Sonnets I.ii*);

It is a beauteous evening, calm and free (*Misc. Sonnets I.xxx*);

Once did She hold the gorgeous east in fee (*National Independence and Liberty I. vi*);

Two Voices are there; one is of the sea (*National Independence and Liberty I. xii*).

VIII. Point out in detail the repetitions of vowels and consonants on which the tone color of one of the passages at the end of Chapter VI depends, and show what principles stated in the chapter they illustrate.







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