PROSODY: Rudiments

Del Bello 2017
PROSODY: OED DEFINITION

The science of versification; that part of the study of language which deals with the forms of metrical composition;

OED v. prosody
One way to approach English verse

- ACCENTUAL-SYLLABIC PROSODY

from Classical Latin
Some scholars (eg: Derek Attridge *The Rhythms of English Poetry*) feel that classical prosody applied to English is inadequate and should be replaced.
IDEAS and METER

• In the moment of composition, one of the central concerns of the poet is arrangement of metric pattern to achieve some kind of musicality.

• Impulse toward order while allowing deviation
WHY METER?

WHO CARES ABOUT METER?

3 objectives:

(1) increase your sensitivity to the formal properties of poetry (i.e. what sounds do)

(2) heighten your pleasure and illumination in reading poetry

(3) understand PROSODY (=features that have to do with how you read out verses)
How does meter work? How does it mean/create meaning?

- It is often a sort of ritualistic framing (metered language is different from ordinary language and thus “framed” as an artistic artifice)
- It often presents variations. Departure from expected metrical norms can create an emotional effect or possibly estrangement.
- It may create **PROSODIC TENSION** (between perfect or ideal metrical pattern and the actual rhythm)
- It may have **HISTORICAL MEMORY**. Having been associated to a certain genre of poetry, a given meter may retain some of the meaning(s) associated to that poetry.
What does meter do?

- Focuses reader’s attention and refines awareness
- Induces hypnosis (meter in most accentual poetry is slightly faster than the normal heart beat ➔ exhilarating effect)
- Has physiological or possibly sexual overtones.
BASIC UNIT of PROSODY

A FOOT (or a BEAT)
Poetic Foot (or Beat)

- A POETIC FOOT is a repeated UNIT of rhythm comprised of two or more stressed and/or unstressed syllables.
So, here we go:

lamb /
di DUM (1 unstressed syllable + 1 stressed)

Trochee = DUM di (1 stressed + 1 unstressed)

Anapest = di di DUM (2 unstressed + 1 stressed)

Dactyl = DUM di di (1 stressed + 2 unstressed)

Spondee = DUM DUM (2 stressed)

Pyrrhic = di di (2 unstressed)
PRONUNCIATION of KEY TERMS

- 'aiæmb → ai'æmbɪk
- 'ænəpɛst → ænə'pɛstɪk
- 'trəuki: → trəu'keɪɪk
- dæk'tɪl → dæk'tɪlɪk
- 'spændi: → span'deɪɪk
- 'pɪrɪk
So, here we go:

**Iamb** = di DUM (1 unstressed syllable + 1 stressed)

**Trochee** = DUM di (1 stressed + 1 unstressed)

**Anapest** = di di DUM (2 unstressed + 1 stressed)

**Dactyl** = DUM di di (1 stressed + 2 unstressed)

**Spondee** = DUM DUM (2 stressed)

**Pyrrhic** = di di (2 unstressed)
lambic pattern

- 1 unstressed syllable followed by 1 stressed syllable
  - repose (re-POSE)
  - belief (be-LIEF)
  - complete (com-PLETE)
The iamb /ˈaɪæmb/ is the most common poetic foot in English verse.

- **Be-HOLD**
- **the SUN** (articles such as “the” would be considered unstressed syllables)
- **And WATCH** (conjunctions such as and would be considered unstressed syllables)
- **De-STROY**
Most English poetry is in iambics, with common variations of metre (trochaic, spondaic, anapestic,) that are accepted as normal in iambic poetry.

So some critics say that all we have in English are only TWO main types of METER: STRICT IAMBIC (no variations) or LOOSE IAMBIC (normal variations).
When a line is said to exhibit iambic feet, the other meters, including spondee and pyrrhic, can substitute for iambs without the abandonment of the foundational metrical pattern. In fact, Robert Frost said that English actually has only two meters, strict iambic and loose iambic. "Strict meter would avoid anaplectic or dactylic substitutions, which add syllables to a line. More supple meter might use these substitutions for ease or greater naturalness."

Trochaic Pattern

- 1 stressed syllable followed by 1 unstressed syllable

- garland (GAR-land)
- speaking (SPEAK-ing)
- value (VAL-ue)
RISING RHYTHM

- It is normally produced by IAMBIC or ANAPAEAESTIC BEATS
- Basic pattern of normal English speech
FALLING RHYTHM

- It is produced by TROCHEES and DACTYLS
- Not in ordinary speech
- Sounds unnatural
Anapestic pattern

- 2 unstressed syllables followed by 1 stressed syllable
- on the ROAD
- interrupt (in-ter-RUPT)
- Una-BRIGDED, contra-DICT, engin-EER, masque-RADE, Gali-LEE
Dactylic pattern

- 1 stressed syllable followed by 2 unstressed syllable
  - happiness (HAP-pi-ness)
  - galloping (GAL-lop-ing)
  - FOR-tunate, SATurday, DAF-fodil, MURmuring, RHAP-sody
To remember what a dactyl is:
Spondaic Pattern

- All syllables have equal stress
  - Heartbreak
  - “Out, out…”
  - "pen-knife," "ad hoc," "heartburn"
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technical Name</th>
<th>Six Common “base” feet /beats in English</th>
<th>Italian equivalent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 IAMB; IAMBIC</td>
<td>Cōntént (=happy) Děstróy</td>
<td>Carrà Papà Età</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 ANAPEST; ANAPESTIC</td>
<td>ēf thē bést Intervene</td>
<td>Fedeltà</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 TROCHEE; TROCHAIC</td>
<td>Cōntént Highway</td>
<td>Anche</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 DACTYL; DACTYLC</td>
<td>Clǎssicǎl via Latin from Greek daktulos, literally finger (the three bones of the finger corresponding to the three syllables).</td>
<td>Massimo Tavolo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 SPONDEE; SPONDAIC</td>
<td>Híght tīde Hum drum</td>
<td>Tuca Tuca Qua Qua</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 PYRRHIC</td>
<td>The sea /sŏn ďf /mists</td>
<td>Ma in un giorno</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Name</td>
<td>Possible prosodic effect</td>
<td></td>
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</table>
# LINE LENGTHS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feet</th>
<th>Meter Type</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>One Foot</td>
<td>Monometer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two Feet</td>
<td>Dimeter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three Feet</td>
<td>Trimeter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Feet</td>
<td>Tetrameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Five Feet</strong></td>
<td><strong>Pentameter</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Six Feet</td>
<td>Hexameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seven Feet</td>
<td>Heptameter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eight Feet</td>
<td>Octameter</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Different meters may achieve different effects

**DUPLE METERS**

- Iambic
- Trochaic
- Spondaic

→ Not as «light» as triple meters

**TRIPLE METERS**

- Anapestic
- Dactylic

→ Often «lighten», possibly ironical or facetious
The 2 most popular verse types in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>BLANK VERSE</th>
<th>Unrhymed iambic pentameter (ten syllables or decasyllabic)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                              | Of man’s first disobedience and the fruit  
Of that forbidden tree whose mortal taste  
Brought death into the world and all our woe  
(Milton, PARADISE LOST) |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HEROIC COUPLET</th>
<th>Rhymed iambic pentameter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
|                              | When I consider everything that grows  
Holds in perfection but a little moment  
That this huge stage presenteth nought but shows  
Whereon the stars in secret influence comment  
(Shakespeare, SONNETS) |
SCANNING LINES: What to do and what you may want TO REMEMBER
WARNING

Keep in mind that metrical pattern is like a music score (the actual reading may differ, and place emphasis on a different syllable to achieve specific rhetorical effects)
REMEMBER that

- Basic meter is based on the fact that all syllables in English are either stressed (at one of several different levels) or unstressed.
EASY SCANNING MARKERS

- Identify possible syllables in a line.
- You can use the sign | to divide feet in a line of verse.
- Use capitals (maiuscole) to indicate STRESS and lower case (minuscole) to indicate UNSTRESSED.

Example:

the PO | eTRY | of EARTH | is NE | ver DEAD |
Example: identification of syllables

poem = PO-em (1 stressed + 1 unstressed)

poetry = PO-e-try (1 stressed + 2 unstressed)

relief = re-LIEF (1 unstressed + 1 stressed)

recommend = re-com-MEND (2 unstressed + 1 stressed)

discomfort = dis-COM-fort (1 unstressed + 1 stressed + 1 unstressed)

entertainment = en-ter-TAIN-ment (2 unstressed + 1 stressed + 1 unstressed)
But keep in mind that it is **NOT SIMPLY A MATTER OF SYLLABLES**
Example: How can we divide the word THICKENING?

- THICKE - NING
  2 syllables

- THICK - EN - ING
  3 syllables
You know that English

Meter is not made up of syllables but beats (or feet) per line
Now you can produce your SCANSION:

- (1) the act of scanning, or analyzing poetry in terms of its rhythmic components
- (2) the graphic representation, indicated by marked accents, feet, etc., of the rhythm of a line or lines of verse

You may have seen scansion marks like the following:

The curved lines are “unstressed” syllables while the straight slashes are “stressed”

This sun/light shames /Novem/ ber where/ he grieves
In dead red leaves, || and will/ not let /him shun
The day, || though bough/ with bough/ be ov/er-rún.
You will know by now that

- The basic meter in English is iambic pentameter, i.e., a line containing 5 iambs.

- So expect to find it as the most widely used pattern in the poems you read
Example of Iambic Pentameter

"When I do count the clock that tells the time"

| when | I | do COUNTER | the CLOCK | that TELLS | the TIME |
| iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb |
The important thing is that, as a general rule of thumb, there should always be more iambics in the line than substituted feet or VARIATIONS; otherwise, the iambic PATTERN will be lost.
"When I have fears that I may cease to be
Before my pen has gleaned my teeming brain"

| when I | have FEARS | that I | may CEASE | to BE |

| be FORE | my PEN | has GLEANED | my TEEM | ing BRAIN |
| iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb |
| iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb |
THERE ARE EXCEPTIONs and VARIATIONS
Certain SUBSTITUTIONS are allowed
They are not considered to disrupt the basic meter (iambic pentameter in this case)
The trochee and the spondee are common substitutions

"Thus is his cheek the map of days outworn"
| THUS is | his CHEEK | the MAP | of DAYS |
| out WORN |
| trochee | iamb | iamb | iamb | iamb |
DOUBLE IAMB

- There is, in addition, one further substitution which may occur, the combination of a pyrrhic foot followed by a spondaic foot; this combination is called the "double iamb" and is counted the same as two regular iambics in a line:
EXAMPLE of DOUBLE IAMB

"I summon up remembrance of things past"

| i SUM | mon UP | re MEM | brance of | THINGS PAST |
| iamb | iamb | iamb{ | pyrrhic | spondee | = double iamb}
Example of a Double Iamb

- "When all the birds are faint with the hot sun"
  | when ALL | the BIRDS | are FAINT | with the HOT SUN |
  | iamb | iamb | iamb { | pyrrhic | spondee | = double iamb}
"When to the sessions of sweet, silent thought"

| WHEN to | the SES | sions of | SWEET SI | lent THOUGHT |
| trochee | iamb | pyrrhic | spondee | iamb |

Since the "pyrrhic" | "spondee" is counted as two regular iambbs (DOUBLE IAMB) , there are still 4 iambic feet in this line, despite the trochaic substitution.
Hypermetric lines
(one extra beat)

- TO BE OR NOT TO BE THAT IS THE QUESTION

- To BE | or NOT | to BE | THAT is | the QUES- | tion;
Masculine Rhyme

single stressed syllable at the end of a line

Stand still, and I will read to thee
A lecture, love, in Love's philosophy.
These three hours that we have spent
Walking here, two shadows went
Along with us, which we ourselves produced.
But now the sun is just above our head,
We do those shadows tread,
And to brave clearness all things are reduced.
Feminine Rhyme

a rhyme that matches two or more syllables, usually at the end of respective lines, in which the final syllable or syllables are unstressed.

A woman’s face with nature’s own hand painted,
Hast thou, the master mistress of my passion;
A woman’s gentle heart, but not acquainted
With shifting change, as is false women’s fashion...
But since she prick’d thee out for women’s pleasure,
Mine be thy love and thy love’s use their treasure.
A Selection of TEXTS
PLEASE NOTE:

there is NO SINGLE 100% CORRECT SCAN OF A POEM.
Different readers may come up with different scan patterns, depending on the stress they decide to lay on specific words.

Of course such variations are limited by syntactical and morphological constraints.
So a basic recognizable pattern or score is usually always present (think of a music score and of variations musicians may introduce when they actually play music based on those scores).
IN the slides that follow, «problem» beats or lines are highlighted in RED. That means variants are very likely or possible. You may find many more examples of tension and «problems» yourself.
MILTON’s METRE

https://poemshape.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/milton-on-blank-verse-iambic-pentameter/
MILTON’S TROCHAIC FEET
Frequently | Occasionally | Occasionally | Rare | Never

MILTON’S ANAPESTIC FEET
Rare | Very Rare | Rare | Never | Never

MILTON’S SPONDAIC FEET
Occasionally | Occasionally | Occasionally | Occasionally | Rare

MILTON’S PHYRRIC FEET
Occasionally | Occasionally | Occasionally | Occasionally | Rare

MILTON’S DACTYLYC FEET
Never
https://poemshape.wordpress.com/2009/02/23/milton-on-blank-verse-iambic-pentameter/
### John Milton

**Topics**
- Poetic style
- Reception history
- Religion
- Politics
- Early life
- Relationships

**Poetry**
- Poems 1645 (*On the Morning of Christ's Nativity* · *Upon the Circumcision* · *The Passion* · *Arcades* · *Comus* · *"Lycidas"* · *"L'Allegro"* · *"II Penseroso"*) · *Paradise Lost* · *Paradise Regained* · *Samson Agonistes* · *Poems 1673*

**Antiprelatical tracts**
- *Of Reformation* · *Of Prelatical Episcopacy* · *Animadversions* · *The Reason of Church-Government* · *Apology for Smectymnuus*

**Divorce tracts**
- *Doctrine and Discipline of Divorce* · *Judgement of Martin Bucer Concerning Divorce* · *Tetrachordon* · *Colasterion*

**Political tracts**
- *Areopagitica* · *The Tenure of Kings and Magistrates* · *Eikonoklastes* · *Defensio pro Populo Anglicano* · *Defensio Secunda* · *A Treatise of Civil Power* · *The Ready and Easy Way*

**Other writings**
- *Of Education* · *The History of Britain* · *Of True Religion*

**Individual sonnets**
- "When I Consider How My Light is Spent" · "On the Late Massacre in Piedmont" · "Methought I Saw my Late Espoused Saint"

**Disputed**
- *De Doctrina Christiana*

**Family**
- John Milton (father) · Edward Phillips (nephew) · John Phillips (nephew)
<p>| 1 | OF Mans First Disobedience, and the Fruit |
|   | Of Mans | First Dis | obe | dience, and | the Fruit |
| 2 | Of that Forbidden Tree, whose mortal tast |
|   | Of that | Forbid | den Tree, | whose mor | tal tast |
| 3 | Brought Death into the World, and all our woe, |
|   | Brought Death | into | the World, | and all | our woe, |
| 4 | With loss of <em>Eden</em>, till one greater Man |
|   | With loss | of E | den, till | one grea | ter Man |
| 5 | Restore us, and regain the blissful Seat, |
|   | Restore | us, and | regain | the bliss | ful Seat, |
| 6 | Sing Heav'nly Muse, that on the secret top |
|   | Sing Heav’n | ly Muse, | that on | the se | cret top |
| 7 | Of <em>Oreb</em>, or of <em>Sinai</em>, didst inspire |
|   | Of Or | eb, or | of Si | nai, dids’t | inspire |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Line</th>
<th>Line</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 8    | That Shepherd, who first taught the chosen Seed,  
      | That Shep | herd, who | first taught | the cho | sen Seed, |
| 9    | In the Beginning how the Heav'n's and Earth  
      | In the | Begin | ning how | the Heav’ns | and Earth |
| 10   | Rose out of *Chaos*: Or if Sion Hill  
      | Rose out | of *Cha* | *os* Or | if Si | on Hill |
| 11   | Delight thee more, and Siloa's Brook that flow'd  
      | De light | thee more | and Si | loa’s Brook | that flow’d |
| 12   | Fast by the Oracle of God; I thence  
      | Fast by | the *O* | ra cle | of God | I thence |
| 13   | Invoke thy aid to my adventrous Song,  
      | In voke | thy aid | to my | ad vent | trous Song |
| 14   | That with no middle flight intends to soar  
      | That with | no mi | ddle flight | in tends | to soar |
Above th' Aonian Mount, while it pursues

Things unattempted yet in Prose or Rhime.
When I consider how my light is spent,
When I half my days, in this dark world and wide,
And that one Talent which is death to hide
Lodged with me useless, though my Soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest he returning chide;
“Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?”
I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies, “God doth not need
Either man’s work or his own gifts; who best
Bear his mild yoke, they serve him best. His state
Is Kingly. Thousands at his bidding speed:
And post o’er Land and Ocean without rest:
They also serve who only stand and wait.”