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POETIC GRAMMAR

(1) Morphology

THE VERB

1. The forms in *-th* for the third person singular, present indicative (liveth, knoweth, saith, both, hath, etc.):

For it *hath* been by sorrow nursed. (Byron)

From her kennel beneath the rock She *maketh* answer to the clock. (Coleridge)

And in silence *prayeth* she. (Coleridge)

Is it a wind that *moaneth* bleak? (Coleridge)

2. The forms in *-st* for the second person singular of both the present and the past indicative (livest, knowest, sayst, dost, livedst, knewest, saidst, didst, hadst, etc.) and also the forms shalt, wilt, art, wert (or wast) of the verbs shall, will, be. These forms are practically inseparable from the second person singular personal pronoun *thou*:

Nor care what land thou *bearst* me to. (Byron)

With double joy *wert* thou with me. (Byron)

Thou *liest*, thou *liest*, thou little foot-page, Loud *dost* thou lie to me! (Scott)

3. The older forms of the past tense and past participle: wrought (worked), bade (bid), begat (begot), clove (cleft), crew (crowed), drave (drove), spake (spoke), throve (thrived), clomb (climbed), clad (clothed), bare (bore, past tense of "bear"), broke (broken), lockt (locked), sate (sat), etc.:

And hark, again, the crowing cock, How drowsily it *crew*.

There she sees a damsel bright, *Drest* in a silken robe of white. (Coleridge)

Aloft in awful state The godlike hero *sate*. (Dryden)

And the loud laugh that *spake* the vacant mind. (Goldsmith)

THE ADJECTIVE

1. The use of adjectives as nouns:

Below the chestnuts, when their buds were glistening to the breezy *blue* [sky]. (Tennyson)

The dreaded *vast* [expanse] of night. (Milton)

Where I used to play on the *green* [grass]. (Blake)

2. The compression of clauses into compound adjective for the sake of brevity:

The *always-wind-obeying* deep. (Shakespeare)

Or in the *violet-embroidered* vale. (Milton)

Before the *crimson-circled* star. (Tennyson)

THE ADVERB

1. Absence of the adverbial suffix *-ly*:

They praised him *soft* and low. (Tennyson)

The green trees whispered *low* and *mild*. (Longfellow)

Oh night, And storm, and darkness, ye are *wondrous* strong. (Byron)

2. The comparative form in *-lier* of adverbs in *-ly*:

You have taken it *wiselier* than I meant you should. (Shakespeare)
Strange friend, present, and to be: Loved *deeper*, *darklier* understood. (Tennyson)

(2) Syntax

1. Deviations from the regular order of words for the sake of preserving the metre:

a) adjective is placed after its noun instead of before it:

Daisies pied and violets blue. (Shakespeare)

So by the caverns of the forest green. (Shelley)

With notes angelical to many a harp. (Milton)

b) subject is placed after predicate:

And in silence prayest she. (Coleridge)
And a wealthy wife was she. (Old Ballad)
Then came still evening on. (Milton)

c) direct object is placed before its verb:

And she me caught in her arms long and small. (Wyatt)
Where wine the wit may not oppress. (Howard)

d) preposition is placed after its noun:

Where echo walks steep hills among.

2. Ellipsis, or omission of words normally required by syntax:

a) of article:

The brink of [the] haunted stream ...
Creeping like [a] snail unwillingly to school ...

b) of noun or pronoun:

Lives there [the man] who loves his pain?
[He] who steals my purse steals trash.

c) of finite verb:

Happy [is] the man, whose wish and care ...
To whom thus Adam [spoke] ...

d) of preposition:

He mourned [for] no recreant friend.
Despair and anguish fled (from) the struggling soul.

e) of relative "that" as the subject of a clause:

For is there aught in sleep [that] can charm the wise?
'Tis distance [that] lends enchantment to the view.

f) of auxiliary verb:

Dear heart, how like you this? (Wyatt)
Wrong not ... the merit of true passion. (Raleigh)
How, why, or when, or where - it matters not. (Shelley)
I speak not, I trace not, I breathe not thy name. (Byron)

ELISION

Elision is the suppression in pronunciation of a vowel or a syllable for the sake of metre. In print, elision is usually shown by the use of the apostrophe: heav'n (heaven), 'tis (it is), 'twas (it was), o'er (over), 'gainst (against), th' (the), i' (in), 'twixt (betwixt), e'en (even), 'neath (beneath), 'mong (among), mem'ries (memories), etc. The letter "e" in the verb-ending "-ed" is often substituted by the apostrophe (lov'd, turn'd, etc.):

And th' eternal morrow dawn. (Crashaw)
For though the hand of fate could force 'Twixt soul and body a divorce. (Crashaw)

E'en from the tomb the voice of Nature cries, E'en in our ashes live their wanted fires. (Gray)

'Mong the blossoms white and red. (Keats)
So then we do anticipate Our after-fate, And are alive i' the skies.

The river Dorman roll'd their blood Into the northern sea;
Who mourn'd his sons' and overwhelm'd The pleasant south country. (Blake)

Sometimes the letter "e" in the verb-ending "-ed" is to be pronounced for the sake of metre. In such cases it is usually provided with the diacritical mark ('): belovèd, charmèd, hancèd, etc.:

No, no! The utmost share
Of my desire shall be,
Only to kiss the air
That lately kissèd thee. (Herrick)

FORMS OF POETRY

A characteristic feature of verse is its typography: the lines do not reach the margins of the page, each line starts with a capital letter, the lines are grouped into stanzas, not in paragraphs, the rhymed lines are often indented. These are purely external deviant indications that distinguish written poetry from non-artistic texts as well as from artistic prose. But the essence of poetic artifice lies in metre and rhyme.

METRE

Linguistics students are well aware of the fact that not all the syllables are pronounced with the same degree of force. Some are made more prominent than others. If we listen carefully to spoken English we shall observe that some syllables are accented (or stressed) while others remain unaccented (unstressed):

The *ex-préss léft Mánch-ester* at sé-ven.

It is obvious that in this sentence the stress falls in a quite haphazard way, and it is for this reason we recognize the sentence as prose. The essential difference between prose and verse is that in prose the stress falls at random, while in verse the accented syllables occur according to some regular pattern. Let us mark the accented syllables in a poetic line:

A *mán* he *wás* to *áll* the *cóuntry* *déar*.

It is immediately clear that the accent in the above line occurs regularly. The line is, in fact, composed of a simple stress pattern of an unaccented syllable followed by a stressed one which is repeated throughout:

— — — — —

(The sign — marks the unaccented syllable, the sign — marks the accented syllable.)

It is a regular pattern of stress, such as this, that in verse constitutes what is called **metre**. **Metre** in Greek means simply "measure", and it is always by stress that the English verse is measured. The science that treats the laws of metre is called **prosody**.

METRICAL FEET

A specific combination of accented and unaccented syllables is called a **foot**. The number of syllables in a foot may be either two or three, but it cannot be less than two or more than three, and only one of them must be stressed. Metrical feet may be of different kinds, according to the number of syllables they contain and the position of the accented syllable. There are five kinds of feet in English verse: **iambus**, **trochee**, **anapest**, **dactyl**, and **amphibrach**.

Iambus consists of one unaccented and one accented syllable (— —):

ap-pear, be-sides, at-tack, sup-ply.

This is the most common of all English feet. The following is an example of iambic verse:

My soul | is dark | — Oh! quick | ly string

The harp | I yet | can brook | to hear;

And let | thy gen | tle fin | gers fling

Its mel | ting mur | murs o'er | mine ear. (Byron)

There are four iambic feet in each of these lines.

Trochee consists of one accented and one unaccented syllable (— —):

ho-ly, up-per, fail-ing, grand-eur.

This is not so common as the iambus. The following is an example of trochaic verse:

Softly | sweet, in | Lydian | measures
 Soon he | soothed his | soul to | pleasures
 War, he | sung, is | toil and | trouble,
 Honour | but an | empty | bubble
 Never | ending | still des | troying;
 If the | world be | worth | thy | winning.
 Think, o | think, it | worth en | joying. (Dryden)

There are four trochaic feet in each of these lines.

Anapest consists of two unaccented syllables followed by an accented one (— — —):

col-on-nade, re-ap-pear, on a hill.

The following is a line in anapest:

From the cen | tre all round | to the sea

There are three anapaestic feet in this line.

Dactyl consists of one accented and syllable followed by two unaccented ones (— — —):

mes-sen-ger, mer-ri-ly, in-fa-mous.

The following is a line in dactyl:

Take her up | tender ly.

There are two feet in this line.

Amphibrach consists of an accented syllable between two unaccented ones (— — —):

re-venge-ful, a-maz-ing.

Amphibrach is very rare in English verse. The following is an example of amphibrach:

Most friendship | is feigning,

Most loving | mere folly;

Then heigh-ho, | the holly!

This life is | most jolly.

A sixth kind of foot, consisting of two accented syllables, is sometimes added. In Latin prosody this foot is called **spondee**. Theoretically there cannot be more than one accent to an English foot. Sometimes, however, two accented syllables are placed together for the purpose of strong emphasis or solemnity:

I saw | thee weep — | the big | bright tear

Came o'er | that eye | of blue. (Byron)

The English metrical feet can be presented in a table thus:

Iambus	—	˘
Trochee	˘	—
Anapest	˘	˘
Dactyl	—	˘
Amphibrach	˘	—
Spondee	—	—

The actual names used for the different kinds of English feet metres are derived from Greek. It should be pointed out that in the classical languages (Greek and Latin) they had a different meaning, for Greek and Latin verse was written on a quite different principle from English, and was scanned according to the "quantity" or length of the syllable, and not according to stress. Thus iambus in Greek and Latin consisted of a short syllable followed by a long, and trochee, of a long syllable followed by a short one, etc.

In English verse the length of the syllable is totally irrelevant. For instance, the line,

Polly | put the | kettle | on and | let's have | tea,

begins with five trochees, all consisting of two short syllables. Thus in English verse the criterion of metre is **stress**.

SCANSION

To *scan* a line of verse is to divide it into metrical feet, count the number of feet and determine the metre. As beginners are usually deaf to metre, it seems advisable that, to find the measure and beat of a verse, one should read it aloud in a slow, sing-song manner. You will notice, at once, that your voice rises and falls at regular intervals, according to the measure of the verse you are reading.

According to the number of feet in their composition, lines of verse are called: **monometer** (one foot), **dimeter** (two feet), **trimeter** (three feet), **tetrameter** (four feet), **pentameter** (five feet), **hexameter** (six feet), **heptameter** (seven feet), and **octometer** (eight feet).

By way of illustration let us scan the following lines:

Is this | a fast, | to keep
The lard | er lean
And clean? (Herrick)

The first line here is trimetric, the second dimetric, the third monometric, all of them iambic.

DEVIATIONS IN METRE

Though the poet composes his verse according to a definite pattern, he does not adhere rigidly to that one pattern in every line. A passage of verse in which every line was in the same meter would be monotonous to the ear. Moreover, the poet often deliberately varies in order to suit the sense, or to foreshadow an important segment. So we find in English poetry such deviations as **substitution in metre**, **hypermetric**, **catalectic**, **run-on lines**, and **cacatura**.

Substitution in Metre Substitution is the use of a foot different from that of the metre in which the poem is written. In the following examples we can see the effect on iambic verse of some common substitutions. Of a trochee:

Stiffen | the sin- | ews, sum- | on up | the blood. (Shakespeare)

Here the initial trochee gives force and emphasis. Of a dactyl:

Chattering | his teeth | for cold | that did | him chill. (Spenser)

When a dactyl replaces an iambus it is usually in the first foot as in this typical instance from Edmund Spenser, where the dactyl gives emphasis and variety to the line.

Of an anapest:

And the com- | ing wind | did roar | more loud

And the sails | did sigh | like sedge. (Coleridge)

The initial anapaests in these two lines from *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* give an effect of hurried speed.

Consider also a blending of iambic and anapaestic feet in the following:

Oh, a dain- | ty plant | is the | iv- | y Green,

That creep- | eth o'er ru- | ins old!

Of right | choice food | are his meals | I ween,

In his cell | so lone | and cold. (Dickens)

Note also a spondee (the second foot of line 3).

Hypermetric syllable When a line has an extra or overflowing syllable, this syllable is called **hypermetric**:

1 As trav | ellers oft | look back | at eve

2 When east | ward dark | ly go | ing,

3 To gaze | upon | that light | they leave

4 Still faint | behind | them glow | ing,

5 So when | the close | of plea | sure's day

6 To gloom | hath near | consigned | us,

7 We turn | to catch | one fad | ing ray

8 Of joy | that's left | behind | us. (Moore)

This is iambic verse in alternate tetrametric and trimetric lines. Lines 2, 4, 6, 8 are hypermetrical. Notice that the first foot of line 5 is a trochee

Catalectic line When a line has an incomplete foot it is called **catalectic**. The catalectic line is common in trochaic and dactylic verse, for it is in keeping with the tendency of English verse to end on a stressed syllable:

Life is | but an | empty | dream. (Longfellow)

This trochaic tetrametric line is catalectic because the last foot is short of one unaccented syllable:

Under the | blossom that | hangs on the | bough. (Shakespeare)

This dactylic tetrameter is catalectic because the last foot is short of two unaccented syllables.

In iambus, however, lines are made catalectic by introducing an accented monosyllable at the beginning of the line instead of an entire iambic foot, as in:

Fill | the can | and fill | the cup:

All | the wind- | y ways | of men

Are | but dust | that ris- | es up,

And | is | light- | ly laid | again. (Tennyson)

Here all the lines (iambic tetrameter) are catalectic because their first feet lack the initial unaccented syllable.

End-stopped and run-on lines Metrical language is divided up into units, the unit being the line. There would naturally be a pause at the end of each line; in the writings of some poets this end-pause is regularly observed, as in the following lines:

How sweet I roam'd from field to field,
And tasted all the summer's pride,
'Till I the prince of love beheld,
Who in the sunny beams did glide! (Blake)

Here, at the end of each line, is a pause. These are end-stopped lines. But a long succession of end-stopped lines is monotonous and singsong. They need to be broken by run-on lines. The run-on line is one in which there is no pause at the end because the sense overflows into the line that follows, as in the following passage:

Thus with the year
Seasons return, but not to me returns
Day, or the sweet approach of ev'n or morn,
Or sight of vernal bloom, or summer's rose,
Or flocks, or herds, or human face divine;
But cloud instead, and ever-during dark
Surrounds me, from the cheerful ways of men
Cut off, and for the book of knowledge fair,
Presented with an universal blank
Of nature's works, to me expung'd and ras'd,
And wisdom at one entrance quite shut out. (Milton)

Notice the run-on lines in the humorous verse by William Schwenk Gilbert:

Among them was a bishop who
Had lately been appointed to
The balmy isle of Rum-ti-Foo,
And Peter was his name.

Caesura (L. *caesura* "division," "stop") is an internal pause in the line. The caesura frequently coincides with a punctuation mark or with a sense pause. It breaks the line into sections for dramatic, as well as for melodious, effect. The caesura in the following lines is marked with a double line:

Milton! || thou shouldst be living at this hour;
England hath need of thee: || she is a fen

Of stagnant waters: || altar, sword, and pen,
Fireside, || the heroic wealth of hall and bower,
Have forfeited their ancient English dower
Of inward happiness. || We are selfish men:
Oh! raise us up, || return to us again;
And give us manners, virtue, freedom, power. (Wordsworth)

Notice how William Wordsworth shifts the position of the caesura to give fluency to the metre and to emphasize his meaning. Thus the basis of English verse is metre with the criterion of stress. The English metrical foot consists of two or three syllables and only one of them can be accented (with the exception of occasional spondees). The typical English foot is iambus which consists of one unaccented and one accented syllable. This does not mean, however, that most of the English poetry is written in monotonous iambic lines of equal length: frequent departures from this pattern heighten the intellectual and aesthetic effects of the verse.

RHYME

Rhyme or **rime** (O. E. *rim*, 'number', spelt 'rhyme' from a supposed connection with Gk. *rhuhmos*) is a repetition of the same sound, usually at the ends of two or more lines. The effect is the greatest when the lines succeed one another immediately or near enough for the resemblance of sound to strike the ear. Monosyllabic rhymes are always accented.

The poet uses rhyme to emphasize the shape of the verse, marking line-ends and controlling the expectations of readers or listeners. Rhyme creates expectations that are met but, also surprises, because the reader or listener expects a recurring sounds but he does not know which exact word will chime. The rhyming word at the end of the line is in a strong position emphasized by the sound repetition thus arresting the decoder's attention and being, therefore, of considerable semantic importance. Thanks to rhyming words which have nothing in common outside the poetic context may bring forth unexpected semantic meanings are created. The most familiar division of rhyme is into single, double and treble rhyme, but quadruple and even quintuple rhymes are also possible. After a French fashion, single rhymes are also called masculine while a double rhyme is called a female or feminine.

Single (masculine or male) rhyme This is a monosyllabic accented rhyme (cage/page, joy/boy). A single rhyme is perfect (or true) under three conditions:

- 1) the vowel or vowels, whatever the spelling may be, must produce precisely the same effect on the ear;
- 2) if any consonant or consonants follow the rhyming vowel or vowels, these (whatever the spelling may be) must produce the same effect;
- 3) the consonant that precedes the rhyme must, to prevent monotony, produce a different effect on the ear.

Thus "hair" and "fair" are perfect rhymes, because the three conditions just stated are all satisfied. But "bear" and "fear" are not perfect rhymes, because the vowel-sounds are not quite the same. Again, "fare" and "af-fair" are not perfect rhymes, because the rhyming vowel is preceded by the same consonant. Again, "ap-peased" and "released" are not perfect rhymes, because the final consonants in the former are voiced, while those in the latter are voiceless.

Double (feminine or female) rhyme The syllable before last is stressed, and the final syllable is unstressed (pleasure/treasure, morning/scorning).

Treble (triple or tumbling) rhyme The third syllable from the end of the line is stressed, while the final two are unstressed. Treble rhymes are more commonly used in comic verse. Thus Gilbert in his punning *Epitaph on a Dentist* uses treble rhyme:

Stranger! Approach this spot with *gravity*!
John Brown is filling his last *cavity*.

When rhyme is dissyllabic or polysyllabic, every syllable except the first must begin with the same consonant (gravity/cavity, utility/futility).

Broken rhyme The rhyme is called broken if more than one word is needed to complete the rhyme (estate/their gate).

Internal (or leonine) rhyme Although rhyme normally occurs at the end of the line, we also find words that rhyme within the same line. This internal rhyme is a favourite device with some poets, for example, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, who uses internal rhyme with a telling effect:

The sun came up upon the left,
Out of the sea came *he*;

And he shone *bright* and on the *right*
Went down into the sea.

Note also internal rhyme in the following well-known lines by Percy Bysshe Shelly:

I bring fresh showers for the thirsting flowers,
From the seas and the streams;
I bear light shade for the leaves when laid
In their noonday dreams.

Poetic licence in rhyme

Generally speaking, rhyme is a matter of the ear, not of the eye, but the difficulty of rhyming in English is considerable, for many words have not a single rhyming word, some have only one, others very few. Certain licence is, therefore, allowed to the poet in the following ways:

Eye (or printer's) rhyme Here words rhyme only to the eye, as love/move, farm/warm, home/some, path/hath, etc.

Identical rhyme Here the same syllable or word rhymes with itself, i. e. the rhyming vowel is preceded by the same consonant, as part/impart, affair/fare, universe/this verse.

Recording of rhyme schemes

The conventional way of noting rhyme schemes is to call the first series "a," the second "b," the third "c" and so on. Normally each new series is indented:

Joyful, joyful!	a
When virginity	b
Seeks all coyful	a
Man's affinity,	b
Fate all flowery	c
Bright and bowery	c
Is her dower!	c
Joyful, joyful.	a

(Gilbert)

The rhyming scheme here is *a b a b c c c a*.

Rhyme, unlike metre, is not essential to verse. Much English verse is unrhymed. Rhyme, as an aid to verse, is post-classic and first appeared in the Middle Ages. The *troubadours* of Normandy, the *troubadours* of Provence, the *minnesingers* of Germany, and the monks of the medieval Church employed rhyme endings for the purpose of poetry. The predecessor of rhyme in Old English verse was alliteration.

ENGLISH VERSE FORMS

There are three basic types of English verse forms: 1) unrhymed (blank) verse, (2) rhymed verse, (3) free verse (vers libre).

Unrhymed (blank) verse This type of verse is much used in epic and dramatic poetry, and is generally in iambic pentameters. It is the metre of Shakespeare's plays, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Wordsworth's *Prelude*, Shelley's *Mont Blanc*, etc. The following is an example of this form:

And far | on high || the keen | sky-cleav- | ing moun- | tains
From | i | cy spires | of sun- | like ra- | diancy fling
The dawn, || as lift- | ed o- | cean's dazz- | ling spray
From some | Atlant- | ic is | let scatt- | ered up,
Sprangles | the wind || with lamp- | like wa- | ter drops. (Shelley)

Notice in the above example the following deviations from the rigid pentameter: the first line contains an unaccented extrametric syllable, the last line, a trochee in the first foot. There are also three caesuras, which occur in different positions. These deviations modify the mechanical effect of regularity, and the verse is rendered more lively and natural. Till recent times, iambic pentameters (and, occasionally hexameters) were the only two varieties of blank verse. The only celebrated example of blank verse is trochaic tetrameters in Henry Wardsworth Longfellow's *Hiawatha*:

Then the | little | Hi a | watha
Learned of | every | bird the | language.

Rhymed verse Most rhymed verse is divided into groups of lines called stanzas. The most common English stanzas are described in the following:

Heroic couplets A couplet would not usually be referred to as a stanza, but it is convenient to deal with it here. Heroic couplets are five-foot iambic lines rhyming in pairs. They are called "heroic" because they have been much used in translating epic or heroic poetry; as in John Dryden's translation of *Virgil*, and Alexander Pope's English version of *Homer*. Examples:

Words are like leaves; and where they most abound,
Much fruit of sense beneath is rarely found. (Pope)

This is a closed couplet, i. e. one in which the sentence form exactly coincides with the couplet and the rhyme has a clinching effect. The closed couplet was, in the heyday of the couplet's vogue (the 18th c.) considered the most polished and correct. But some writers of heroic couplets prefer to neglect the endpause, and carry over the sense from one line and one couplet to another. For this feature the French term **enjambement** is used:

O that those lips had language! Life has passed
With me but roughly since I heard thee last. (Cowper)

Four-line stanzas: quatrains

A stanza of four lines is called a **quatrain** (Fr. *quatrain*, Lat. *quatour*, "four"). Of such stanzas the most common examples are:

(a) the **Ballad metre** – alternate tetrameter and trimeter, rhyming

a b a b:

For when the morn came dim and sad *a*
And chill with early showers, *b*
Her quiet eyelids closed – she had *a*
Another morn than ours. *b* (Hood)

(b) the **Heroic Quatrain** (or **Elegiac Stanza**) – four iambic pentameters, rhyming *a b a b*. This form is best known through Thomas Gray's *Elegy*:

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day, *a*
 The lowing herd winds slowly o'er the lea, *b*
 The plowman homeward plods his weary way *a*
 And leaves the world to darkness and to me. *b* (Gray)

Eight-line stanza: **Ottava Rima**

Ottava Rima (lt. ottavo "the eighth", and rima "rhyme") was borrowed from Italy. Each stanza consists of eight iambic pentameters with the system of rhyming *a b a b c c*. It was used by George Gordon Byron in *Don Juan*:

His mother was a learned lady, famed *a*
 For every branch of every science known *b*
 In every Christian language ever named, *a*
 With virtues equall'd by her wit alone *b*
 She made the cleverest people quite ashamed, *a*
 And even the good with inward envy groan, *b*
 Finding themselves so very much exceeded *c*
 In their own way by all the things that she did. *c*

Nine-line stanza: **Spenserian stanza**

This metre is called **Spenserian** after its originator, Edmund Spenser (1552-99), who used it in his *Faerie Queene*. Afterwards it was used with great success by Keats, Byron, Shelley. The Spenserian stanza consists of eight iambic pentameters, followed by one iambic hexameter (Alexandrine), and arranged according to the rhyming scheme *a b a b c b c c*:

Roll on, | thou deep | and dark- | blue O- | cean, roll, *a*
 Ten thou- | sand fleets | sweep o- | ver thee | in vain *b*
 Man marks | the earth | with ru- | in; his | control *a*
 Stops with | the shore; | u pon | the wa- | tery main *b*

The wrecks | are all | thy deed; | nor doth | remain *b*
 A shad- | ow of | man's rav- | age save | his own, *c*
 When for | a mo- | ment like | a drop | of rain *b*
 He sinks | into | thy depths | with bub- | ling groan, *c*
 Without | a grave, | unknell'd, | uncof- | fined, and *c*
 unknown. *c*
 (Byron)

The **sonnet** (lt. *sonetto*) is a verse-form of fourteen iambic pentameters used for a complete poem. It was invented in Italy and introduced in England in the sixteenth century. The sonnet was a favourite with the Elizabethans: Shakespeare, Spenser, and Sidney all wrote famous collections of sonnets. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries it fell out of use, but was revived by the Romantic poets – Keats, Wordsworth, and others – and has been used by many poets since that time. English sonnets belong to two types: **Petrarchan** (or Italian) and **Shakespearian** (or English proper).

Petrarchan Sonnets of the Petrarchan type are those that follow the model set by the Italian poet, Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch). They consist of two parts, the octave (first eight lines) and the sestet (last six lines). The octave is composed of two quatrains, and the rhyme-scheme is *a b b a a b b a*; the sestet has two or three rhymes arranged in various ways. In the strict Petrarchan sonnet there should be a break in the sense at the end of the octave, so that a new turn of thought is introduced by the sestet.

Shakespearian The sonnets of Shakespeare consist of three quatrains with alternate rhyme-scheme is *a b a b c d c d e f e g g*. In the Shakespearian sonnet the thought is carried right through until it reaches a climax in the final couplet. Other English poets have also adopted this sonnet form.

Examples of sonnets:

ON FIRST LOOKING INTO CHAPMAN'S HOMER

Much have I travell'd in the realm of gold *a*
 And many goodly states and kingdoms seen *b*
 Round many western islands have I been *b*
 Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold. *a*

 Oft of one wide expanse had I been told *a*
 That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne: *b*
 Yet did I never breathe its pure serene *b*
 Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold: *a*

 – Then felt I like some watcher of the skies *c*
 When a new planet swims into his ken; *d*
 Or like stout Cortez, when with eagle eyes *c*

 He stared at the Pacific – and all his men *c*
 Look'd at each other with a wild surmise – *d*
 Silent, upon a peak in Darien. (Keats)

In this sonnet John Keats praises George Chapman, 1559-1634, British poet, dramatist, and translator of Homer. Keats describes the pleasure he had in his wide reading; he speaks of books as if they were countries and he himself a traveller. Cortez, 1485-1547, was the ruthless Spanish conqueror of Mexico. The Isthmus of Darien is part of modern Panama.

Shakespearean:

SONNET 21

So is not with me as with that Muse,
 Stirr'd by a painted beauty to his verse,
 Who heaven itself for ornament doth use
 And every fair with his fair doth rehearse,
 Making a couplement of proud compare,

With sun and moon, with earth and sea's rich gems,
 With April's first-born flowers, and all things rare
 That heaven's air in this huge rondure hems.

O, let me, true in love, but truly write,
 And then believe me, my love is as fair
 As any mother's child, though not so bright
 As those gold candles fix'd in heaven's air.
 Let them say more that like of hearsay well:
 I will not praise that purpose not to sell. (Shakespeare)

In this sonnet the poet is stating the fact that he does not approve of those who use language as a tool to embellish their ideas, and that he himself would not do so.

Free verse (*vers libre*). Free verse consists of unrhymed lines of varying length, generally not arranged according to any definite scheme.

Free verse in English poetry received a great elevation in the works of one of the greatest American poets, Walt Whitman (1819-1892), who was a revolutionary in versification: he disregarded all the classical conventions of poetry writing and worked out a peculiar and powerful kind of "rhythmical poetry" of his own which is largely based on reiteration.

The following is a passage from Whitman's poem *Song of Myself*:

The runaway slave came to my house and stopped outside,
 I heard his motions cracking the twigs of the woodpile,
 Through the swung half-door of the kitchen I saw him limpsy and weak,
 And went where he sat on a log, and led him in and assured him,
 And brought water and fill'd a tub for his sweated body and bruise'd feet,
 And gave him a room that enter'd from my own, and gave him some coarse clean clothes,
 And remember perfectly well his revolving eyes and his awkwardness,
 And remember putting plasters on the galls of his neck and ankles;
 He stayed with me a week before he was recuperated and pass'd north;
 I had him sit next me at table, my firelock leaned in the corner.

Free verse has been used for many modern poems written in English.

LITERARY DEVICES

The pleasure experienced in listening to or reading poetry comes from the interrelation of all the literary devices that the poet uses to present the sense, or meanings, of the poem: **speaker's choice, sound instrumenting, imagery, and figurative language.**

SPEAKER'S CHOICE

The **speaker** of the poem is the voice of the poem. Sometimes the speaker is the poet himself or herself; sometimes the speaker is a character or thing created by the poet.

The speaker of the poem does more than deliver the poet's message. The speaker is also a part of that message.

In many poems the speaker is the poet, who may speak in order to share a current experience or recall a poignant memory. On the other hand, poets often invent speakers very different from themselves to explore new ways of looking at life. Such speakers may or may not share the poet's opinions and concerns.

The words used by the speaker of a poem tell us a great deal about the speaker's identity, personality, and feelings. This information can help us understand the poem's meaning more fully, and it can also add to the enjoyment of the poem.

In Sylvia Plath's poem the fictional speaker is a personified object whose appearance and personality are vividly revealed in the following excerpt:

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful ...

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.

(Sylvia Plath, "Mirror")

SOUND INSTRUMENTING

Poetry sometimes uses phonemes to reflect the noises of real life, or to symbolize other sensory or abstract notions. Well-known are cases of **onomatopoeia** – the use of words whose sounds imitate those of the signified object or action.

When we listen to a poem, we expect the sound to mirror and reinforce the meaning. We expect a poem about tenderness to be read tenderly, softly, gently. We expect an angry poem to sound harsh and threatening. Often the poet chooses words and rhythms that help us read it in such a way that sound and sense go together.

Thus in the following lines from Elizabeth Barrett Browning the rhythm and word repetition suggest actual galloping:

I sprang to the sturruup, and Joris, and he;
I galloped, Dirck galloped, we galloped all three.

Sound again mirrors sense in the following line:

Down, down, down into the darkness of the grave.
(Edna St. Vincent Millay, "Dirge Without Music")

Because of the drawn-out vowel sounds and the heavy consonant sounds, this line sounds dark, dull, and mournful.

Poetry abounds in some specific types of sound instrumenting, the leading role belonging to alliteration and assonance.

Alliteration is a repetition of the same consonant at the beginning of neighbouring words or accented syllables. In the history of English poetry alliteration preceded rhyming. As used in Old English poetry, alliteration meant the repetition of the same consonant sound at the beginning of the stressed syllable in two or more words. Alliteration was part of the very structure of the first Old English poems. It still survived vigorously in the days of William Langland (14th c.), who wrote the long poem, "*Piers Plowman*," in unrhymed alliterative verse. The following is an excerpt:

In a somer seson, when soȝt was the sonne,
I shope me in shrouds, as I shepe were.
[In summer season, when soȝt was the sun,
I wrapped myself up as if I were a shee].

As a basic structural device, alliteration is rarely used today, but it is extensively used as a device for phonetic ornamentation and enrichment. Notice the effective use of alliteration in the following lines:

Swiftly, swiftly flew the ship,
Yet she sailed softly too;
Swiftly, swiftly blew the breeze –
On me alone it blew.

(Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner")

Assonance is a repetition of similar vowels or diphthongs usually in stressed syllables.

Alfred Lord Tennyson, for example, employs assonance with powerful effect:

Dear as remembered kisses after death,
And sweet as those by hopeless fancy feined
On lips that are for others; deep as love,
Deep as first love, and wild with all regret,
O Death in life, the days that are no more.

In these lines Tennyson plays on the music of vowel sounds, repeating them and echoing them throughout the thought – *dear, sweet, deep*. Assonance here mingles with alliteration to produce an exquisite sense of harmony.

IMAGERY

Much of the poetry is made up of experiences we could understand through our senses. These appeals to our senses make poetry *intangible* – they give us things we can imagine seeing, hearing, or feeling. The concreteness is created by the poet's use of imagery. These are mostly *visual* images – things we can see. Others are *sound* images – things we can hear. Still others are *touch* images – textures, surfaces, and the like. Finally there are *taste* images.

Poetry plays on the senses as a musician plays on the strings of the instrument.

If it is a good poem, the odds are very great that the reader will be invited to see, hear, smell, or touch its subject, to feel its warmth or its fragility.

The senses are of crucial importance in the enjoyment of poetry.

In "Those Winter Sundays" Robert Hayden conveys a feeling of bitter cold by appealing to our sense of cold and touch. We can visualize the "blue-black cold" and almost feel "cracked hands that ached." Our sense of sound is called upon in the image of the blazing fire dispelling the icy cold. Images which appeal to our senses create vivid pictures of the cold house in our minds.

Sundays too my father got up early,
and put his clothes on in the blue-black cold,
then with cracked hands that ached
from labour in the weekday weather made
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,
and slowly I would rise and dress,
fearing the chronic anger of that house ...

Poets often use imagery to make *abstract* ideas more real for the reader. In "I Stepped From Plank to Plank" Emily Dickinson uses concrete images to help readers visualize the process of learning from experience:

I stepped from plank to plank
A slow and cautious way.
The stars about my head I felt,
About my feet the sea.

I knew not but the next
Would be my final inch –
This gave me that precarious gait
Some call experience.

REVIEW QUESTIONS AND TASKS

1. What is meant by "poetic diction"?
2. Why is it possible to call poetic words "aristocrats in the language"?
3. Enumerate the principal peculiarities of poetic grammar.
4. What is meant by "elision"?
5. Point out the poetic words and give their neutral synonyms in the following:

- (a) *Go, wondrous creature! mount where Science guides;
Go, measure earth, weigh air, and state the tides.* (Pope)
- (b) *The wonder done! behold the matchless prince!* (Thomson)
...behold at once
- (c) *Yet hark, how through the peopled air
The busy murmur glows!* (Gray)
- (d) *Methinks I hear in accents low
The sportive kind reply.* (ibid.)
- (e) *The breezy call of incense-breathing morn ...* (ibid.)
- (f) *Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
Oft have we seen him at the deep of dawn ...* (ibid.)
- (g) *While self-dependent power can time defy,
As rocks resist the billows and the sky.* (Goldsmith)
- (h) *A time there was, ere England's griefs began.* (ibid.)
- (i) *Will no one tell me what she sings?
Perhaps the plaintive numbers flow
For old, unhappy, far-off things,
And battles long ago.* (Wordsworth)
- (j) *Light be the turf of thy tomb!
May its verdure like emeralds be!* (Byron)

6. Identify and discuss the archaic grammatical forms in the following excerpts:

- (a) *Why didst thou, venturesome lover,
Why didst thou trust the seas?* (Gay)
- (b) *But come in friendship's angel-guise;
Yet dearer thou than friendship art.* (Thomson)
- (c) *Thou source of all my bliss, and all my woe,
That found'st me poor at first, and keep'st me so.* (Goldsmith)
- (d) *Teach him that states, of native strength possessed,
Though very poor, may still be very blest.* (ibid.)
- (e) *Thus Nature spake. — The work was done —
How soon my Lucy's race was run!* (Wordsworth)
- (f) *The river glideth at his own sweet will.* (ibid.)
- (g) *On earth thou wert all but divine ...* (Byron)
- (h) *Though thou art fall'n, while we are free
Thou shalt not taste of death!* (ibid.)
- (i) *Would that breast were bared before thee
Where thy head so oft hath lain,
While that placid sleep came o'er thee
Which thou ne'er canst know again.* (ibid.)
- (j) *Thou wast not born for death, immortal Bird!* (Keats)
- (k) *When, at eve, thou rovest
By the star thou lovest ...* (Moore)

- Identify and discuss the syntactic peculiarities in the following:

- (a) *The Bride hath pac'd into the Hall,
Red as a rose is she.* (Coleridge)
- (b) *... Storm and Wind,
A Wind and Tempest strong!* (ibid.)

- (c) *The Sun came up upon the left,
Out of the Sea came he. (ibid.)*
- (d) *At length did cross an Albatross,
Through the fog it came. (ibid.)*
- (e) *She found me roots of relish sweet,
And honey wild and mamma dew. (Keats)*
- (f) *... be mine the hut,
That from the mountain's side,
Views wilds, and swelling floods,
And hamlets brown... (Collins)*
- (g) *Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands. (Tennyson)*
- (h) *Fresh is the river water
And quiet among the rushes. (Stevenson)*
- (i) *Indulge no more may me
In this sweet-bitter pastime. (Hardy)*
- (j) *Into my heart an air that kills
From yon far country blows. (Housman)*

8. Identify and explain the cases of elision in the following excerpts:

- (a) 'Twas when the seas were roaring
With hollow blasts of wind ... (Gay)
- (b) Ye shades of ancient heroes, ye who toil'd
Thro' long successive ages to build up
A lab'ring plan of state ... (Thomson)
- The boast of heraldry, the pomp of pow'r,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Await, alike, th' inevitable hour;
The paths of glory lead but to the grave (Gray)*

9. Explain the use of the diacritical mark in the following line:

And there she lulled me asleep. (Keats)

10. What is a metrical foot? What are the chief kinds of feet found in English verse? Give examples.

11. What is meant by "scansion"?

12. Explain and give examples for the following terms: hypermetric line, catlectic line, run-on line, caesurae.

13. What is rhyme? What are the main kinds of rhyme found in English verse? Give examples.

14. Explain the need for poetic license in English rhyme.

15. Which is more essential to English versification, metre or rhyme?

16. Explain the difference between blank, rhymed and free verse.

17. Explain and give examples for the following terms: heroic couplets, stanza, Ottawa Rime, Spenserian stanza.

18. What is a sonnet? Describe the two types of sonnet found in English

19. The following is a stanza from *Child Harold's Pilgrimage* by Byron. Read it carefully, perform a - d below.

*The Commonwealth of Kings - the Men of Rome!
And even since, and now, fair Italy!
Thou art the World, the Home
Of all Ari yields, and Nature can decree;
Even in thy desert, what is like to thee?
Thy very weeds are beautiful - thy waste
More rich than other climes' fertility;
Thy wreck a glory - and thy ruin graced
With an immaculate charm which cannot be defaced.*

- (a) Determine the type of rhyme; record the rhyming scheme.
- (b) Scan the passage and describe the metres employed.
- (c) Taking into consideration the number of lines, the scansion and the rhyming scheme determine the verse form of the above stanza.
- (d) Find any run-on lines and caesurae.

20. What literary techniques does the poet use to present the sense (meaning) of the poem? Characterize them.

21. Find a poem rich in concrete images that appeal to the senses of sight, sound, smell, taste and touch. Using each of these senses as a column heading, list as many words from the poem as you can that form concrete images in your mind by appealing to your senses.

22. What are the most common kinds of figurative language used in poetry? Characterize them.

UNIT 2

TRANSLATION OF POETRY

The translation of poetry, especially into poetry, presents very special difficulties, and the better the original poem, the harder the translator's task. This is because poetry is, in the first instance, carefully constructed to express all the subtleties of exactly what the poet wants to say. Second, to achieve this end, the poet calls forth all the resources of the chosen language, matching word choice, word order and grammatical constructions with the metrical phonology peculiar to the language, summoning also, as in rhyme, assonance, and alliteration. The available resources differ from language to language: Latin and Greek used quantitative metres, contrasting long and short syllables, French places approximately equal stress and length on each syllable, while English and Ukrainian rely on stress-marked metres. The translator must try to match the stylistic use of the particular resources in the original language with comparable resources in his own. The proper choice of the translation method helps the translator achieve functional faithfulness in reproducing all levels of the text despite the differences separating two languages, two authors, and two literary situations involved. Of course, lexical, grammatical, and stylistic considerations are so interrelated and interwoven in poetry, that a literary translation is usually very far from a literal word-for-word rendering. The more the poet relies on language form, the more complicated his verses are in that particular language, and the harder they are to translate adequately. This is especially true for lyric poetry, which, in many languages, is characterized by wordplay, complex rhymes and some sound-instrumenting power.

Unit 2 includes the materials which reflect the views of some scholars on the verse translation process. Read and discuss the information about the major mechanisms, which, through the art of translation, make cross-cultural communication possible.