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WORD ACCENT, PHRASE ACCENT, AND METER*

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0. The material below, consisting of text with twelve interspersed exercises, was originally written as an essentially self-contained introduction to word accent (that is, for English, stress), phrase accent, and meter, to be used as supplementary material in an upper-division/graduate introduction to linguistics. Students frequently evince interest in these topics, and students with literary interests genuinely need something to tie what they know about poetry to what they are learning about linguistics. As it happens, I haven't been able to insert this unit into the already crowded agenda of the course, but Nancy Levin has used a version of it in an undergraduate introduction to phonology course in the English Department at the State University College of New York at Fredonia, with a good response from her students. Sample answers are provided in an appendix.

Some of the exercises are designed to get the student used to listening and to using the notation, that is, to get the student acquainted with the concepts. A number ask for generalizations. I believe that the 'formulate a principle' or 'make a generalization' task is so central in learning anything about language that I introduce exercises of this sort as soon as possible--here, in exercise 2. The non-English word accent exercises (4-6) illustrate the three most common types of fixed accent systems, and the generalization usually stands out so clearly that students are able to disregard the unfamiliar spelling systems and exotic symbols. (Note that the text always talks about accent on *syllables*. Repeated use of this locution is supposed to lead students away from contemplating answers framed in terms of vowels, consonants, or worse, letters. Students who don't read the text, and a few overingenious types, will not be deterred, however.) The final three exercises involve using the notation, making generalizations, and giving evidence for claims. They stress a view of verse as pattern plus an allowable range of deviation, and they introduce generalizations involving frequency rather than occurrence/nonoccurrence. The humorous and/or popular character of the examples is intended to help keep the student alert in the midst of all this.

An important characteristic of words, in a great many languages, is that certain syllables stand out more than others--certain syllables are *accented*, and others are not. The most common situation is for there to be only one accented syllable per word, as in the English words *below* (accented on the last syllable), *silly* and *parable* (accented on the first), and *examine* and *inaccurate* (accented on the second). Even in languages (like English) that have words with more than one accented syllable, most common words have only one accented syllable. In addition, it is usually the case

in such languages that when there is more than one accented syllable in a word, one of them predominates: *snowman* has two accented syllables, the first more prominent than the second; *monsoon* is similar, but the second syllable is more prominent; *hurricane* has the primary accent on the first syllable, but a secondary accent on the last; *inexact* has the reverse pattern, with a subsidiary accent on the first syllable and the main accent on the last; *Montana* has the accent pattern secondary-primary-weak; *category* has the pattern primary-weak-secondary-weak; *parasitic* has secondary-weak-primary-weak; *aquamarine* has secondary-weak-weak-primary; and other patterns are possible.

At this point it is clear that some notation for these various accent levels would be useful. Several systems are in use: one employs marks ultimately due to Classical Greek metrics (an 'acute' mark ˊ for primary accent, a 'grave' mark ˋ for secondary accent, and either no mark or a 'breve' ˘ for weakly accented, or so-called 'unaccented', syllables); another employs numerals (a 1 for primary accent, a 2 for secondary accent, and either no mark or a zero for unaccented syllables). In the second system, the accent patterns of the examples already given are as follows:

	primary accent on last syllable	primary accent on next-to-last syllable	primary accent on first syllable
2 syllables	0 1 below 2 1 monsoon	—	1 0 silly 1 2 snowman
3 syllables	— 2 0 1 inexact	0 1 0 examine 2 1 0 Montana	1 0 0 parable 1 0 2 hurricane
4 syllables	2 0 0 1 aquamarine	2 0 1 0 parasitic	1 0 2 0 category

There are other possible accentuations for four-syllable words in English: 0 2 0 1, in *comedienne* and *inopportune*, alongside 2 0 0 1 in the table; 2 0 1 2 in *anticyclone*, alongside 2 0 1 0 above, and 1 0 0 2 in *alphabetize*, alongside 1 0 2 0 above; and several patterns with primary accent on the *second* syllable--0 1 0 0 in *mechanical* and *inaccurate*, 2 1 0 0 in *cantankerous*, and 2 1 0 2 in *misdecorate*.

Exercises

1. Assign accent patterns to the following English words. Do *not* look them up in a dictionary; say them *out loud*, or have a friend read them out loud to you, perhaps several times, and listen carefully.

kaleidoscope	Tennessee
canoe	maniac
commentator	canopy
accent	bandanna
parrot	despotic
pervert [noun]	telegraph
pervert [verb]	telegraphy
	telegraphic

2. English has no words with the accent pattern 0 0 1--hence the blank in the table right above *inexact*. There also aren't any 0 0 0 1 words (otherwise like *aquamarine*, but with weakly accented first syllable) or any 0 0 1 0 words (otherwise like *parasitic*, but with weakly accented first syllable), or any 0 0 1 2 words (otherwise like *anticyclone*, but with weakly accented first syllable). Formulate one principle that disallows these patterns, while permitting the other patterns that are illustrated above.

A syllable with secondary accent has an ambiguous status in English. On the one hand, it has less accent than the syllable with primary accent, so that it can count as *not* accented. On the other hand, it is more prominent than unaccented syllables, so that it can count as *accented*. This ambiguity is widely exploited in English verse, where syllables with secondary accents sometimes count as unaccented, sometimes as accented. This is easily seen in nursery verse, where a word like *Banbury* (1 2 0) sometimes counts as having only one accented syllable--

(1) Ríde ă cŏck-hórse tŏ Bánbŭry̆ Cróss

Tŏ búy lĭttlĕ Jóhnny̆ ă gállŏpĭng hórse

and sometimes as having two--

(2) Ăs Í wăs góing tŏ Bánbúry̆

Ŭpón ă súmmĕr's dáy,

My̆ dáme hăd búttĕr, éggs, ănd frúit,

Ănd Í hăd córn ănd háy.

(rhymes 28 and 27 in Opie and Opie, *The Oxford Dictionary of Nursery Rhymes*).

So far I've treated English word accent intuitively, trusting that your own feelings about which syllables are most prominent will agree with mine (though I should point out that some people who produce and perceive accent levels perfectly well in ordinary circumstances have a lot of trouble making explicit judgments about these levels; there is, unfortunately, no guarantee that being able to do something means you can describe what it is you're doing). But what is the physical reality corresponding to these accent levels? The matter turns out to be quite complex. The subjective impression that accented syllables are *louder* than unaccented is not very reliable; the *pitch* of the syllable and its *duration* are better indicators of accent in English, with higher pitch and extra length being associated with accent (see the survey in Lehiste, *Suprasegmentals*, sec. 4.4). Such a complex system of signalling accent through a combination of pitch, duration, and loudness is known as *stress accent*, or simply *stress*. It is to be contrasted with systems that use only pitch (*pitch accent*)[1] as the indicator of prominence on specific syllables. Japanese has a pitch accent; the following phrases have different accent patterns--

hási desu 'it's chopsticks'

hasí desu 'it's a bridge'

hasí désu 'it's an edge'

(from J.D. McCawley, *The Phonological Component of a Grammar of Japanese*, p. 135); in each case the accented syllables have high pitch and the others low pitch. Ancient Greek had a somewhat more elaborate pitch accent system, with both a primary accent (the so-called 'acute', characterized by high pitch) and a secondary (the so-called 'circumflex', characterized by a rise and then fall in pitch within one syllable), and with the unaccented ('grave') syllables bearing low pitch (Sturtevant, *The Pronunciation of Greek and Latin*, ch. 4).

In all of these languages, the arrangement is basically one primary accent per word. The question to be asked about any particular word is: *which syllable* has the primary accent? However, there are languages that use pitch and length in a very different, and quite un-English way: in them, the pitch of each syllable, or the length of each vowel or consonant, may be chosen (perhaps with a few restrictions) from a set of two or more possibilities. In these languages, the question is: *which pitch/length* does this syllable have? So, in Mandarin (Chinese), there are many sets of words that differ only in their pitch levels--a syllable pronounced much like American English *shir* means 'division' with a level high pitch, 'ten' with a pitch rising from mid to high, 'dung' with a pitch that dips briefly to low and then rises to high, or 'to be' with a pitch falling from high to low (these are customarily graphed as ˥ , ˧˥ , ˨˩˦ , ˥˩ , or labeled as 55, 35, 214, 51, with the numbers going from lowest pitch 1 to highest pitch 5: Chao, *A Grammar of Spoken Chinese*, sec. 1.3.4). Here, the choice of pitch level carries as much meaning as the choice of vowel in the English words *meat*, *mate*, *mutt*, and *moot*. Languages that use choice of pitch level

to contrast different words are sometimes called *tone languages*. Languages that use choice of length in the same way might be called *quantity languages*. The term is not standard, but languages of this type are very numerous. In Korean, for instance, there are contrasts between [seda] 'to count' and [se:da] 'string', both with a first vowel roughly like that in English *late*, and between [sɛm] 'fountain' and [sɛ:m] 'jealousy', both with a vowel like that in English *let*--but in Korean the vowel in the second word of each pair is noticeably longer than the vowel in the first (Ladefoged, *A Course in Phonetics*, pp. 23-4). (Notice in the transcription that [e:] is not two sounds, some sound [e] followed by another sound [:]; it is simply a longer version of the sound transcribed [e].)

So far I've contrasted accent systems, in which the basic principle is the marking of a single syllable in a word as most prominent, with the use of pitch and length as properties of individual syllables or sounds. Virtually every known language has some sort of accent system, but only some are tone languages or quantity languages.

There are, alas, a rather large number of types of accent systems. English has a particularly complex system; in part, the placement of English stress seems to be utterly arbitrary and associated with particular words (so that *serif*, *tariff*, *rabbit*, *abbot*, *Perry*, *merit* have stress on the first syllable, while *giraffe*, *carafe*, *Marie*, *abut*, *kaput*, and *legit* have it on the last, though the vowels and consonants in the words are very similar), but to some extent it can be predicted. In many languages, the position of accent is not so *free* as it is in English, but instead is wholly predictable (or *fixed*), on the basis of syllable position and/or the vowels and consonants involved.

Exercises

3. Below are pairs of related English words, nouns in Column A and related adjectives with the ending *-ic* in column B.

(a) For each word, mark the syllable with primary stress with the numeral 1.

(b) Formulate a simple principle that governs where primary stress falls in the words of Column B.

A	B
cone	conic
scene	scenic
rune	runic
hygiene	hygienic
Islam	Islamic
icon	iconic

A	B
atom	atomic
nomad	nomadic
angel	angelic
volcano	volcanic
symphony	symphonic
aroma	aromatic
alcohol	alcoholic
period	periodic
acrobat	acrobatic
metronome	metronomic
electron	electronic
anemia	anemic
catastrophe	catastrophic
cataclysm	cataclysmic
aristocrat	aristocratic
hermaphrodite	hermaphroditic

4. Below are some Turkish words (in ordinary Turkish orthography), with English translations. The syllable with primary stress has been marked with a ´. Formulate a principle that says where Turkish stress is placed.

él	'a hand'
elím	'my hand'
deníz	'an ocean'
denizé	'to an ocean'
denizín	'of an ocean'
evcikdén	'from a little house'
dişimizín	'of our tooth'
dişlerimizín	'of our teeth'
evcikimizé	'to our little house'
evciklerimizé	'to our little houses'

5. Below are some Finnish words (in ordinary Finnish orthography), with English translations. The syllable with primary stress has been marked with a ´. Formulate a principle that says where Finnish stress is placed.

jós	'if, whether'
sýy	'cause, reason'
níin	'thus, so, yes'
nýt	'now'
héti	'at once'
sékä	'and'
súuri	'large'
láulan	'I sing'
láulaa	'(s)he sings'
láulamme	'we sing'

láulavat	'they sing'
hárrastan	'I'm interested in'
hárrastamme	'we're interested in'
rákennustaide	'architecture'
sánomalehti	'newspaper'
rákennustaiteen	'of architecture'
rákennustaidetta	'some architecture'

6. Below are some words in Yawelmani Yokuts (a native language of California), adapted from Kuroda's *Yawelmani Phonology*. The syllable with primary stress has been marked with a ´. Formulate a principle that says where stress is placed in this language.

kí	'this'
náʔ	'I'
ké:ni	'to this'
ʔámin	'they'
k'íley	'cloud'
ʔílkit	'is/was sung'
ʔilíkhin	'sing/sang'
p'axá:t'it	'is/was mourned'
k'ilé:yaw	'in a cloud'
ʔuplálliʔ	'wild dove'
ʔilikmíxhin	'sing/sang with'
p'axat'míxhin	'mourn(ed) with'
ʔuplallé:ni	'to a wild dove'

7. The English words below all have primary stress on the second syllable. Those in group A have secondary stress on the first syllable, while the first syllable of the words in group B is unstressed. What distinguishes the two groups?

A.

Montana	Rangoon	cartoon
cantankerous	Bengali	torment [verb]
anticipate	Mankato	Marconi
bandanna	fastidious	Margolis
shampoo	asbestos	
campaign	escort [verb]	
ambition	tableau	
bombard	Atlantic	
amphora	raclette	

B.

canoe	Adorno
banana	accordion
lament	affair
chemise	bazaar
guitar	position
atomic	assert
capacity	machine
cigar	Moran
calliope	Columbus

8. There are a large number of exceptions to the main generalization distinguishing groups A and B in the preceding exercise. In all of them, a word you would expect to be in group A, with secondary stress on the first syllable, turns up in group B, with unstressed first syllable. There is, for example, some tendency for very familiar names to lose a secondary stress on the first syllable; people who live in Saskatchewan or Atlanta are more likely to place the names *Saskatchewan* and *Atlanta*, respectively, in group B than are those of us with less familiarity with these places. Some other exceptions are systematic, and can be used to refine the main generalization. Consider the words in group C below (with unstressed first syllable). Compare them both with group A and with a new group D (with secondary stress on the first syllable), and state an exception clause on the main generalization.

C. Capri
abrasive
acrylic
acrostic
agree
matriculate
Patricia
quadrille
acute
acquire

D. abstract [adjective]
poltroon
Mancuso

The accent patterns of words are in some ways most obvious in situations where rhythm is of the essence--in verse, whether set to music or not. The rhythmic patterning of verse (indeed, the rhythmic patterning of all speech) depends, however, not only on the accent patterns of individual words spoken in isolation, but also on patterns of prominence assigned to *groups* of words, ultimately to whole sentences. Some words, like the English *to* associated with 'infinitive' verb forms, are ordinarily subordinated to the following verb, as is a pronoun subject to its following verb:

(Ĭ wánt) (tŏ gó)

A combination of adjective and noun (*good tea*, *excellent jam*, *heavy weather*, *obnoxious buffoons*) also has greater prominence on the second word, the noun, but here the first word is not unaccented. Rather, the adjective has a secondary accent: *gòod téa*, *èxcellent jám*, and so on. Note that we are providing *two* accentual descriptions of a phrase like *heavy weather*--one for the accent pattern of each word in isolation, one for the combination. There are important differences between the two systems. In particular, there is much more room for variations on an accentual theme in phrase patterns than in word patterns. In *I see you*, any one of the three words

can bear the primary accent, with a different meaning associated with each choice. But a word like *obnoxious* must always have the primary accent on the second syllable; most words have only one accent pattern, and the few

2 0 1 1 0 2

examples of variation in pattern (like *Tennessee* vs. *Tennessee*) are associated not with meaning differences, but with dialect or style differences.

Nevertheless, for the purposes of verse the *similarities* between the two levels of accentual organization must be exploited. The phrase-accent pattern of *Ĭ wánt* and *tŏ gó* must be identified with the word-accent pattern

0 1 0 1 0 1 0 1

of *below*, *anoint*, *command*, and *ago*; phrases like *good tea* as well as words

2 1 0 1

like *monsoon* must be treatable either as weak-strong (like *below* and *I want*)

2 0 0 1 00

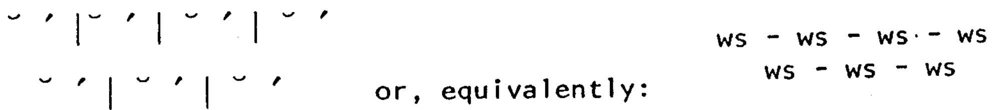
or as strong-strong; and a long word like *antediluvian* must count as equivalent to such two-word phrases as *àccŭrăte ínstrŭmĕnt* or *àmŏrŏus dállĭănce*.

In fact, in a verse form the accentual patterns of phrases must be matched up with an abstract pattern characteristic of that form. The units (called *feet*) composing these abstract patterns themselves each consist of one strong syllable with associated weak syllables. The weak-strong foot of *to go* and *ago* is traditionally called an *iamb* (verses composed primarily of iambs are then *iambic*). Much English verse is evenly iambic; consider the beginning of the 'letter poem' from the last chapter of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*:

(3) Thĕy tóld mĕ yóu hăd béen tŏ hér,

Ănd méntiŏned mé tŏ hím

Here the accent pattern of this sentence has been matched to a completely regular iambic *meter*:



(Notice that the two syllables of *mentioned* are split between two feet; meter is no respecter of word boundaries.)

The impression of great regularity in verse depends on more than the existence of a dominant foot type throughout. Verse is also divided into *lines*, normally all of the same length in feet. (Traditional verse in English also requires certain lines to *rhyme*. But rhyme is by no means a universal characteristic of poetic forms--neither ancient Greek nor ancient Latin verse employed it, for instance--while some sort of metrical

organization is.) In English popular verse by far the dominant line length is four feet, technically *tetrameter*. (There are corresponding terms for lines of other lengths--*monometer* (one foot), *dimeter* (two), *trimeter* (three), *pentameter* (five), *hexameter* (six), *heptameter* (seven), *octameter* (eight).) Both lines of the first Banbury Cross rhyme, (1) above, have four feet; so do the first and third lines of the second Banbury Cross rhyme (2), and the first line of the *Alice* letter poem (3).

But what of the remaining lines of (2) and (3)? They seem to have only three feet. Appearances are sometimes deceiving, however. To see what is really going on, beat your fingers or clap your hands on the strong syllables of (2), reprinted below, as you read it. You should find that

(2) As Í was góing to Bánbúry

Upón a súmmer's dáy,

My dáme had bútter, éggs, and frúit,

And Í had córn and háy.

you don't rush immediately from the last word, *day*, in the second line to the first word, *my*, in the third, but rather that you pause briefly--and that in that pause a *beat falls*. The second line of (2) has the equivalent of a musical *rest* at its end (one might call it a *silent foot*, if the name weren't so contradictory). In fact, (2)--and also (3), though this is not obvious in a two-line extract--are just as much tetrameter as (1); in (2) and (3) the form is varied some by a regular alternation between lines with four full feet and those with three feet plus a rest. For (3), we can notate this pattern as

˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´

˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R

Any verse as rigidly regular in meter as (3) would quickly become singsong and boring. Extended passages of unvarying iambs are very rare in English verse, in fact. Usually a predominantly iambic pattern is varied by the addition or elimination of weak syllables, or by the reversal of the pattern, especially at certain positions within the line. The Banbury Cross rhyme (2), for instance, is perfectly iambic in lines 2 through 4, but its first line has two alterations in the pattern:

˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ´ ˘

The third foot has an extra weak syllable, and the fourth is reversed, strong-weak rather than weak-strong.

Exercise

9. Below is the first stanza of a nonsense poem, 'The Jumblies', by Edward Lear (*The Complete Nonsense of Edward Lear*, pp. 71-4).

(a) Notate the pattern of feet and rests, using ˘ to stand for a weak syllable, ´ for a strong, | for the boundary between feet, and R for a rest.

(b) Argue that this poem is iambic tetrameter.

(c) What is the most frequent type of deviation from the iambic pattern in this poem?

(d) Which feet are most likely to show this deviation?

They went to sea in a sieve, they did;
    In a sieve they went to sea:
In spite of all their friends could say,
On a winter's morn, on a stormy day,
    In a sieve they went to sea.
And when the sieve turned round and round,
And everyone cried, "You'll all be drowned!"
They called aloud, "Our sieve ain't big;
But we don't care a button, we don't care a fig:
    In a sieve we'll go to sea!"
        Far and few, far and few,
            Are the lands where the Jumblies live;
        Their heads are green and their hands are blue;
            And they went to sea in a sieve.

The iamb is not the only type of foot in use in English verse. Three others occur with moderate frequency. First, there is the reversed iamb, or *trochee*, as in *weather*, in the *bury* of *Banbury* in (2), or in *know it*. The witches' incantation in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*--

(4) Double, double, toil and trouble,
    Fire burn and cauldron bubble.

is almost perfectly trochaic (indeed, if *fire* is read with two syllables rather than one, as it almost always is, the lines *are* perfectly trochaic). Then there is an iamb with an extra weak syllable, an *anapest*, as in *in a sieve* or *inexact*; and finally a trochee with an extra weak syllable, a *dactyl*, as in *care for it* or *parable* or either half of *unsuitability*. To summarize:

	strong syllable last		strong syllable first	
2-syllable feet	˘ ´	IAMB	´ ˘	TROCHEE
3-syllable feet	˘ ˘ ´	ANAPEST	´ ˘ ˘	DACTYL

(Note the stress patterns of these technical terms: *iamb*, *trochee* and *dactyl* are all 1 2, *anapest* is 1 0 2. If you've done exercise 3, you should know where the primary stress falls in *iambic*, *trochaic*, *dactylic*, and *anapestic*.)

It's useful to have a term for an abbreviated iamb or trochee, for a foot consisting entirely of one strong syllable. This is a *spondee*[2] (stress pattern 1 2 again; the related adjective is *spondaic*).

Exercises

10. Below are four limericks, a clean one by Edward Lear and then three less savory examples from George Legman's collection *The New Limerick* (#84, 926, and 1605).

(a) Notate the pattern of feet and rests, as before, for the Lear limerick.

(b) What is the dominant meter in these verses--iambic, trochaic, anapestic, or dactylic?

(c) What are the most frequent types of deviation from the pattern, and where do they occur?

(d) Limericks are customarily said to have five lines 'of which the first, second, and fifth, consisting of three feet, RIME; and the third and fourth lines, consisting of two feet, RIME.' (Thrall, Hibbard, and Holman, *A Handbook to Literature*, p. 258; *rime* is their eccentric spelling of *rhyme*)--that is, they are customarily viewed as a five-line form with the pattern

trimeter
trimeter
dimeter
dimeter
trimeter

Argue that limericks are in fact tetrameter, just like almost all English popular verse.

A There was an Old Man who supposed
That the street door was partially closed;
But some very large Rats
Ate his coats and his hats,
While that futile Old Gentleman dozed.

B The enjoyment of sex, although great,
Is in later years said to abate.
This well may be so,
But how would I know?--
I'm now only seventy-eight.

C The Grecians were famed for fine art,
And buildings and stonework so smart.
They distinguished with poise
The men from the boys,
And used crowbars to keep them apart.

D There was a young girl from Samoa
Who said to a sailor named Noah:
"You can kiss me and squeeze me,
But remember, to please me
I'm allergic to spermatozoa."

11. Below are four examples of a single verse form, all taken from Anthony Hecht and John Hollander's *Jiggery-Pokery* (pp. 81, 93, 106, and 112).

(a) Notate the pattern of feet and rests, as before, for 'No Foundation'.

(b) What is the dominant meter in this form?

(c) What is the most frequent type of deviation from this pattern, and where does it occur?

(d) The form is customarily printed as two stanzas consisting of four lines each. If so, how many feet do these lines have?

(e) Suggest some reasons why you might want to look at this form as tetrameter (again).

<u>Historical Reflections</u>

Higgledy-piggledy,
Benjamin Harrison,
Twenty-third President,
Was, and, as such,

Served between Clevelands, and
Save for this trivial
Idiosyncrasy,
Didn't do much.

* * *

Vice

Higgledy-piggledy
Thomas Stearns Eliot
Wrote dirty limericks
Under the rose,

Using synecdoches,
Paranomasias,
Zeugmas, and rhymes he de-
Plored in his prose.

* * *

No Foundation

Higgledy-piggledy
John Simon Guggenheim,
Honored wherever the
Muses collect,

Save in the studies (like
Mine) which have suffered his
Unjustifiable,
Shocking neglect.

* * *

High Art

Higgledy-piggledy
Anthony Hollander,
Two-bards-in-one, worked their
Brains to a storm,

Seeking out words for the
Antepenultimate
Line of this dismally
Difficult form.

12. Bob Dylan's music comes in a variety of forms, some of them quite complex. But most of his songs use either traditional American folk song forms or blues forms, often with considerable freedom in the number of unaccented syllables in a foot. Exhibit A below has three verses and the refrain of a Dylan folk song, 'Lay Down Your Weary Tune' (1964-5); Exhibit B has three verses and the refrain of a Dylan blues song, 'Tombstone Blues' (1965). (Quotations from *Bob Dylan*, a 1974 Warner Bros. collection of music and lyrics.)

(a) Notate the pattern of feet and rests, as before, for 'Lay Down Your Weary Tune'.

(b) What is the dominant meter in this lyric? The abstract scheme of feet and rests?

(c) What is the most frequent type of deviation from these patterns, and where does it occur?

(d) Read through 'Tombstone Blues' several times, out loud and fairly fast, to get the beat. What is the abstract scheme of feet and rests in the verses? In the refrain?

(e) What is the dominant meter?

A

Struck by the sounds before the sun,
I knew the night had gone,
The morning breeze like a bugle blew
Against the drums of dawn.

The ocean wild like an organ played
The seaweed's wove its strands,
The crashin' waves like cymbals clashed
Against the rocks and sands.

I stood unwound beneath the skies
And clouds unbound by laws,
The cryin' rain like a trumpet sang
And asked for no applause.

[Refrain]
Lay down your weary tune, lay down,
Lay down the song you strum
And rest yourself 'neath the strength of strings,
No voice can hope to hum.

B

1. The sweet pretty things are in bed now of course
The city fathers they're trying to endorse
The reincarnation of Paul Revere's horse
But the town has no need to be nervous.

The ghost of Belle Starr she hands down her wits
To Jezebel and nun she violently knits
A bald wig for Jack the Ripper who sits
At the head of the chamber of commerce.

4. The King of the Philistines has soldiers to save
Put jawbones on their tombstones and flatters their graves
Puts the pied piper in prison and fattens the slaves
Then sends them out to the jungle.

Gypsy Davey with a blow torch he burns out their camps
With his faithful slave Pedro behind him he tramps
With a fantastic collection of stamps
To win friends and influence his uncle.

6. Where Ma Raney and Beethoven once unwrapped their bed roll
Tuba players now rehearse around the flagpole
And the National Bank at a profit sells road maps for the soul
To the old folks home and the college.

Now I wish I could write you a melody so plain
That could hold you dear lady from going insane
That could ease you and cool you and cease the pain
Of your useless and pointless knowledge.

[Refrain]
Mama's in the fact'ry
She ain't got no shoes
Daddy's in the alley
He's lookin' for food
I'm in the streets
With the Tombstone Blues.

Appendix: Sample Answers

1. kaleidoscope: 0 1 0 2
canoe: 0 1
commentator: 1 0 2 0
accent: 1 2 (1 0 in British English)
parrot: 1 0
pervert [noun]: 1 2
pervert [verb]: 0 1
Tennessee: 2 0 1 (1 0 2 for some American speakers)
maniac: 1 0 2
canopy: 1 0 0
bandanna: 2 1 0
despotic: 0 1 0 or 2 1 0
telegraph: 1 0 2
telegraphy: 0 1 0 2
telegraphic: 2 0 1 0

2. No English word can begin with two or more unaccented syllables.

3. a.

cone	conic
scene	scenic
rune	runic
hygiene	hygienic
Islam or Islam	Islamic
icon	iconic
atom	atomic
nomad	nomadic
angel	angelic
metal	metallic
volcano	volcanic
symphony	symphonic
aroma	aromatic
alcohol	alcoholic
period	periodic
acrobat	acrobatic
metronome	metronomic
electron	electronic
anemia	anemic
catastrophe	catastrophic
cataclysm	cataclysmic
aristocrat	aristocratic
hermaphrodite	hermaphroditic

4. The last syllable of a word is stressed.

5. The first syllable of a word is stressed.

6. The next-to-last syllable of a word (or the only syllable, if the word is a monosyllable) is stressed.

7. Words in group A have two consonants between their first and second vowels, while those in group B have only one. [Note that this generalization must be made in terms of sounds rather than letters: *calliope*, *accordion*, *affair*, *assert*, and *machine* in group B are spelled with two consonant letters in the relevant place, but are pronounced with only one consonant sound there.]

8. The consonants *r y w* (the full set of approximants in English) do not count at the end of a sequence of consonants. [Note that *r* does count at the beginning of such a sequence: *cartoon*, *torment*, *Marconi*, and *Margolis* are in group A. The effect of the exception clause is to require two (or more) consonants preceding an *r*, *y*, or *w* for a word to fall into group D.]

9. (a)

```
  ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ |   ˘ ´ | R
  ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ |   ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ |   ˘ ´ | R
  ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ |   ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
  ˘ ´   | ˘ ˘ ´ |   ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
  ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ |   ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´   | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ |   ˘ ´ | R
    ´   |   ˘ ´ |     ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´   | ˘ ˘ ´ |   ˘ ´ | R
  ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´   |   ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | R
```

(b) The meter is clearly one with the strong syllable last: thirteen of the fourteen lines (all except line 11) begin with a weak syllable, and all fourteen end with a strong. So the meter is either iambic or anapestic. The shortest line, 11, has only six syllables but four clear strong ones (*far* and *few*, each twice), and ten of the fourteen lines can be read easily with four strong syllables. So the verse is tetrameter.

Three of the lines (3, 6, and 8) are perfectly iambic (tetrameter), only one (9) perfectly anapestic (also tetrameter). Indeed, of the 51 feet, 33 are iambic, 16 anapestic, and 1 spondaic. This is a clear, two to one in fact, preponderance of iambic feet.

(c) Extra weak syllables at the beginnings of feet--that is, anapests rather than iambs.

(d) The odd--first and third--feet, but especially the first. There are 7 anapests in first feet, 3 in second, 5 in third, 1 in fourth.

10. (a)

```
˘ ´   | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | R
˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | R
˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | R
```

(b) Anapestic.

(c) Missing weak syllables at the beginnings of feet--that is, iambs rather than anapests. They occur in the first foot of a line. There are nine iambic feet in the four limericks, and they are all at the beginnings of lines: line 1 of A; lines 3, 4, and 5 of B; lines 1, 2, and 4 of C; and lines 1 and 2 of D.

(d) Lines 1, 2, and 5 of all four limericks are tetrameter as they stand: there is a rest in place of the fourth foot in each case. That leaves lines 3 and 4. But these are only two feet long; putting them together makes a single four-foot, i.e. tetrameter, line. The limerick form is then four lines of tetrameter, written as five:

```
˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | R
˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | R
˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´
˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | R
```

11. (a)
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘
´ ˘ ˘ | ´
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘
´ ˘ ˘ | ´

(b) Dactylic.

(c) A spondaic rather than dactylic foot. At the end of the fourth and eighth lines. Indeed, the fourth and eighth lines of all four poems end in spondees. The lines are otherwise perfectly dactylic.

(d) Two.

(e) 'Vice' has a word (*deplored*) divided between two successive lines, a practice known to modern 'free verse' but essentially never seen in tightly constructed--metrically regular and rhyming--poems like these. The other three poems all have another type of peculiar line division. They have lines ending in 'little words' that are normally pronounced in a phrase with *following* words: *and* (line 5 in 'Historical Reflections'), *the* (line 3 in 'No Foundation' and line 5 in 'High Art'), *like* (line 5 in 'No Foundation'), unstressed *his* (line 6 in 'No Foundation'), unstressed *their* (line 3 in 'High Art'). These line divisions all feel uncomfortable and peculiar. Note that all except one of the offenses in line division occur at the ends of odd lines, in particular lines 3, 5, and 7. In other words, lines 3, 5, and 7 often behave as if they formed a unit with the immediately following lines. This proposal is strengthened somewhat by the rhyme pattern, which in the written versions of the poems seems to call for rhyme between the two spondees, at the ends of lines 4 and 8. Rhymes at this distance, four lines apart, are not unknown, but are rather odd. If, however, each pair of written lines is treated as a single verse line, then the required rhyme will be between lines 2 and 4 (rather than 4 and 8), a very common every-other-line pattern (compare the refrain, lines 11-14, of 'The Jumblies' in the previous exercise). The pattern for this form is then

´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘ | ´
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘
´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘ | ´ ˘ ˘ | ´

12. (a) ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´

(or, with stress shifted to *by*: ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´)

˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R

˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R

˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R

˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ˘ ´ | ˘ ´
˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | ˘ ´ | R

(b) Iambic. Each verse has four tetrameter lines, with foot 4 of the even (rhyming) lines replaced by a rest.

(c) An anapest replaces the iamb in the third foot of a line, especially line 3 (this happens three times in line 3, once in line 1).

(d) Verse: two sets of four lines of anapestic tetrameter, with the last foot of line 4 replaced by a rest (lines 1, 2 and 3 rhyme). Refrain: three lines (written as six) of anapestic tetrameter, with the first foot of each line shortened and reversed, that is, realized as a trochee or spondee (lines 1 and 3 rhyme again, and line 2 half-rhymes with them).

NOTES

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[1]A system of *quantitative accent*, in which only duration marks prominence, is logically possible, but I know of no unproblematic examples.

[2]In classical Greek metrics, a spondee is a foot consisting of *two accented* syllables, but since English verse allots one strong syllable to each foot, the term can be used for a foot of one strong syllable without any confusion.

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