Poetry

I – Prosody

1. Scansion

The prosody of English verse is **both syllabic and accentual**. In other words, a line of verse is based on a **metre**, defined by:

- the number of syllables in it
- which of them are stressed and which are unstressed.

Counting the syllables in a line and placing the stresses on them is called **scanning** a line.
Let us scan a line:

I wandered lonely as a cloud.

An ictus (/) is used to mark a stressed syllable or beat, a breve (˘) to mark an unstressed syllable or offbeat:

˘	/	˘	/	˘	/	˘	/
I	**wan**	dered	**lone**	ly	**as**	a	**cloud**

In everyday words:

The line goes da-**dum**, da-**dum**, da-**dum**, da-**dum**.

Each "da-**dum**" (a weak syllable followed by a strong syllable) is called an iamb. The iamb is the basic foot of this line. There are four feet in the line, so it is called a tetrameter.

In technical language:
The line is an iambic tetrameter.

2. Metrics

As in French prosody, **a rhythmic unit is called a metrical foot**. In English prosody, however, a single syllable cannot be a foot. A foot is necessarily composed of at least two syllables, which means there are different types of feet defined by:

- the number of syllables
- which of them is stressed.

The type of foot used determines the **metrical pattern or rhythm** of a line. Two-syllable feet produce a **binary rhythm** while three-syllable feet produce a **ternary rhythm**.

The most common types of feet:

- Two-syllable feet:
  - ˘ / **i**amb (n.) /ˈaɪ.æm/ → i**am**bic (adj.) /aɪ.ˈæm.bɪk/
  - / ˘ **tro**chee (n.) /ˈtrəʊ.kiː/ → tro**cha**ic (adj.) /trəʊ.ˈkeɪ.ɪk/
  - / / **spon**dee (n.) → spon**da**ic (adj.)
  - ˘ ˘ **pyrr**hic (n. / adj.)
- Three-syllable feet:
  - ˘ ˘ / **a**nap(a)est (n.) → ana**pes**tic (adj.)
  - / ˘ ˘ **dac**tyl (n.) → dac**ty**lic (adj.)
  - ˘ / ˘ **amph**ibrach (n.) → amphi**brach**ic (adj.)

Trochee **trips**[1] from **long** to **short**;
From long to long in solemn sort
Slow Spondee stalks, **strong foot**!, yet ill able
Ever to **come** up with **Dac**tyl's tri**syll**able.
I**am**bics **march** from **short** to **long**.
With a **leap** and a **bound** the swift **A**napests **throng**.
Samuel Coleridge

Sometimes, **deviation from usual pronunciation** is required for metrical purposes:

- The most common occurrence of this: is the syllabic –ed, pronounced /-id/, sometimes (though not always) indicated by an acute or grave accent ("-éd" or "-èd").
- Diaeresis /daɪˈəɾɪsɪs/: splitting a single syllable in two (e.g. -tious, -tion…).
- Synaeresis /sɪˈnɪəɾɪsɪs/: fusing two syllables into one.

3. Basic vocabulary

A line (of verse): *un vers*
A verse: *une strophe*
Verse: *la poésie*
Prosody, metrics
Scan: *scander*
A stressed /accented / strong syllable: a beat
An unstressed / unaccented / weak syllable: an off-beat
caesura /sɪ.ˈzjʊər.ə/

[1] trip: *trébucher*

I. Scan the following nursery rhymes. What are the effects of the different metres?

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,
How I wonder what you are!
Up above the world so high,
Like a diamond in the sky!

Jane Taylor (1783-1824)

Hickory, dickory, dock,
The mouse ran up the clock.
The clock struck one,
The mouse ran down,
Hickory, dickory, dock.

Ladybird, ladybird, fly away home,
Your house is on fire,
Your children shall burn!

II. Scan the following extracts and describe their prosody.
What is the basic metre? What is its effect?
Do you need to change from the usual pronunciation to scan the lines?
Are there metrical variations? What are their effects?
Are all the stresses equally strong?
What words are enhanced by the prosody? How?

Now is the winter of our discontent
Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
And all the clouds that lour'd upon our house
In the deep bosom of the ocean buried.

Shakespeare, *Richard 3*, 1.1 (c. 1591)

The Assyrian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in purple and gold;
And the sheen of their spears was like stars on the sea,
When the blue wave rolls nightly on deep Galilee. (…)

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever grew still!

Lord Byron, *The Destruction of Sennacherib* (1815)

This is the forest primeval. The murmuring pines and the hemlocks,
Bearded with moss, and in garments green, indistinct in the twilight,
Stand like Druids of eld, with voices sad and prophetic,
Stand like harpers hoar, with beards that rest on their bosoms.
Loud from its rocky caverns, the deep-voiced neighboring ocean
Speaks, and in accents disconsolate answers the wail of the forest.

Henry W. Longfellow, Evangeline (1847)

To be, or not to be: that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? To die: to sleep;
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to, 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. To die, to sleep;
To sleep: perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause (…).

Shakespeare, *Hamlet* 3.1 (c. 1601)

And my poor fool is hang'd! No, no, no life!
Why should a dog, a horse, a rat have life,
And thou no breath at all? Thou'lt come no more,
Never, never, never, never, never!

Shakespeare, *King Lear* 5.3 (c. 1603)

III. Identify feet and/or lines of verse in the following prose extracts. Study their effect(s).

"Another piece [of music] called to her mind a dainty young woman clad in an Empire gown, taking mincing dancing steps as she came down a long avenue between tall hedges."

From *The Awakening* (novel, 1899) by Kate Chopin

"Then [the fly] began the immense task of cleaning the ink from its wings. Over and under, over and under, went a leg along a wing as the stone goes over and under the scythe."

From 'The Fly' (short story, 1922) by Katherine Mansfield

"Surely from this period of ten months, this is the lesson: Never give in. Never give in. Never, never, never, never – in nothing, great or small, large or petty – never give in, except to convictions of honour and good sense. Never yield to force. Never yield to the apparently overwhelming might of the enemy."

Speech given by Winston Churchill at Harrow School in October 1941

4. Line lengths

mo**no**meter /mə.ˈnɒ.mə.tə/
< dimeter /ˈdɪ.mə.tə/
< trimeter /ˈtrɪ.mə.tə/
< te**tra**meter /te.ˈtræ.mə.tə/
< pen**ta**meter /pen.ˈtæ.mə.tə/
< he**xa**meter /hek.ˈsæ.mə.tə/

An iambic hexameter (especially one with a caesura between the third and fourth feet) is called an ale**xan**drine.

< hep**ta**meter /hep.ˈtæ.mə.tə/

5. Rhythm

- Lines using feet that move from an offbeat to a beat (such as the iamb and the anapest) are often described as having a **rising rhythm**.
- Conversely, lines that use feet moving from a beat to an offbeat (such as the trochee and the dactyl) are said to have a **falling rhythm**.

Rising rhythms generally evoke speech, while falling rhythms tend to sound more musical.

- The iambic rhythm often produces a walking effect. It is the most frequent foot in English verse, possibly because its binary structure and rising rhythm fit the English language the most easily. Therefore, it can sound "natural", evoke a heartbeat, or induce monotony.
- The anapest can be described as "running", "galloping", "trotting, "jogging"...
- The trochee often evokes song.
- The dactyl often evokes dance.
- The pyrrhic and the spondee can only be used as variations in binary (iambic or trochaic) contexts.

6. Line endings and metrical variations

- When the unstressed syllable(s) after the beat of a foot are omitted, this foot is said to be **defective**.
- Sometimes, a (necessarily unstressed) syllable at the beginning or the end of a line does not "count" to determine the prosody of that line: such syllables are said to be **extrametrical**.
  - An extra weak syllable at the beginning of a line is called an **anacrusis**.
  - An extra weak syllable at the end of a line is called a weak or **feminine ending**.
- When a line ends on an offbeat, it is said to have a weak or **feminine ending**.
- When a line ends on a strong syllable, it has a **masculine ending**.
- In an iambic line, the substitution of a trochee for an iamb is called a **trochaic reversal**, trochaic inversion or choriambic variation.

7. Prosody and syntax

- When the syntax calls for a pause at the end of the line, it is **end-stopped**.
- When it does not, the line is a **run-on line**, there is an **enjambment**.

8. The following mistakes are, sadly, all too common. Please *do* avoid them:

~~The line is an iamb/trochee...~~

An iamb / trochee… is a foot, not a line.

→ The (rhythm of the) line is (mainly) iambic/trochaic...

→ The line is (mainly) written in iambs/trochees...

→ The line is an iambic/trochaic pentameter/tetrameter...

~~The poem is an iambic/trochaic... pentameter/trimeter...~~

A pentameter / tetrameter... is a line, not a poem.

→ The poem is written in iambic / trochaic... pentameter(s).

~~The line is an iambic pentameter; its last foot is defective.~~

A defective iamb is an impossibility.

The use of iambs/trochees... creates an impression of regularity.

This is a truism that can be said of any line or lines of verse as long as they follow a metrical pattern, whatever it is.

This truism can be avoided by replacing "regularity" by a more precise notion, as regularity can produce different effects. Does it produce a pleasant impression of order? Does it elicit an unpleasant, humdrum feeling of monotony?... If it does not produce any identifiable effect which contributes to the meaning of the poem, do not mention it.

IV. Scan the following poem.
What is the effect of the basic metre and of its variations?
What is the significance of the rhymes and form?

Ashes of Life

Love has gone and left me and the days are all alike;
  Eat I must, and sleep I will,—and would that night were here!
But ah!—to lie awake and hear the slow hours strike!
  Would that it were day again!—with twilight near!

Love has gone and left me and I don't know what to do;
  This or that or what you will is all the same to me;
But all the things that I begin I leave before I'm through,—
  There's little use in anything as far as I can see.

Love has gone and left me,—and the neighbors knock and borrow,
  And life goes on forever like the gnawing of a mouse,—
And to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow
  There's this little street and this little house.

Edna St. Vincent Millay (1917)

V. Read the following poem by Lord Byron (1814).
How do sounds contribute to the meaning of the poem?

She walks in beauty, like the night
Of cloudless climes and starry skies;
And all that's best of dark and bright
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:
Thus mellowed to that tender light
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.

One shade the more, one ray the less,
Had half impaired the nameless grace
Which waves in every raven tress,
Or softly lightens o'er her face;
Where thoughts serenely sweet express
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.

And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,
But tell of days in goodness spent,
A mind at peace with all below,
A heart whose love is innocent!

VI. Read the poem 'Introduction' from *Songs of Innocence* by William Blake.

Scan the poem, determine its prosody and form.
Who is the narrator of the poem?
What musical instruments are mentioned in the poem?
What musical instruments are evoked by the prosody and the sounds of the poem?
How does the poem introduce *Songs of Innocence*?

II – Sounds

1. Naming and describing sounds

a. Vowels

Vowels are sounds produced with "an open mouth" and with the vocal cords vibrating.
English vowels fall into two categories:

- monophthongs, which have only one sound,
- diphthongs, which move from one sound towards another.

English monophthongs can be

- lax (or short): /æ, e, ɪ, ʊ, ɒ/ or tense (or long): /iː, uː, ɜː, ɔː, ɑː/
- rounded: /ɒ, ɔː, uː/ or unrouded (all others).

They can be categorized according to

- the place of the tongue when uttering them (mouth position),
- how open (aperture) the mouth is when uttering them.

Mouth position → / Aperture ↓	front	central	back
close	/iː/ (sheep), /ɪ/ (fish), /i/*		/uː/ (goose), /ʊ/ (book)
mid	/e/ (dress)	/ɜː/ (bird), /ə/*	/ɔː/ (more)
open	/æ/ (cat)	/ʌ/ (duck)	/ɑː/ (start), /ɒ/ (dog)

* reduced forms occurring only in unstressed syllables

Diphthongs

Diphthongs are noted using two signs, but they are considered as single phonemes (sounds).
/əʊ/ goat
/aʊ/ mouse
/aɪ/ high
/eɪ/ face
/ɔɪ/ boy
/ɪə/ dear
/eə/ square
/ʊə/ poor

- Subjectively, vocalic sounds are often perceived as providing light and colour.
- They are perceived as **high**er in pitch the closer and the more front they are, and as **low**er the more open and the more back.
- High sounds are often associated to light, low sounds to darkness.

b. Consonants

Consonants are produced by closing the mouth at some point.

- Unlike vowels, consonants may be uttered without the vocal cords vibrating: they are either **voiced** (with vibration) or **voiceless** (without vibration).

In addition to voicing, consonants can be categorized according to two other criteria:

- **place of articulation**, that is to say where the closure occurs,
- **manner of articulation**, determined by how much the mouth is closed:
  - To produce a plosive consonant, the mouth is closed completely, then opened suddenly.
  - To produce an affricate, the mouth is closed completely, then opened gradually.
  - To produce a fricative consonant, the mouth is almost but not completely closed.

Manner and place of articulation	Alveolar stops	Bilabial stops	Velar stops	Palatal affricates	Dental fricatives	Labio-dental fricatives	Alveolar fricatives	Palatal fricatives
voiceless	/t/	/p/	/k/	/tʃ/	/θ/	/f/	/s/	/ʃ/
voiced	/d/	/b/	/g/	/dʒ/	/ð/	/v/	/z/	/ʒ/

- Voiceless consonants are often perceived as "harder" than voiced sounds.
- A plosive consonant is also called a stop.
- /m/ and /n/ are nasal consonants.
- /r/, /l/ and /w/ are called liquid consonants.
- /s/, /z/, /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ are called sibilant consonants.
- Just as vowels tend to be perceived in terms of light and colour, consonants are often perceived as noise.

VII. Study the form and images of the following poems.

'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love'

Come live with me and be my love,
And we will all the pleasures prove
That valleys, groves, hills, and fields,
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.

And we will sit upon the rocks,
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks,
By shallow rivers to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals.

And I will make thee beds of roses
And a thousand fragrant posies,
A cap of flowers, and a kirtle
Embroidered all with leaves of myrtle;

A gown made of the finest wool
Which from our pretty lambs we pull;
Fair lined slippers for the cold,
With buckles of the purest gold;

A belt of straw and ivy buds,
With coral clasps and amber studs:
And if these pleasures may thee move,
Come live with me, and be my love.

The shepherds' swains shall dance and sing
For thy delight each May morning:
If these delights thy mind may move,
Then live with me and be my love.

Christopher Marlowe (1564-1593)

'The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd'

If all the world and love were young,
And truth in every shepherd's tongue,
These pretty pleasures might me move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Time drives the flocks from field to fold,
When rivers rage and rocks grow cold;
And Philomel becometh dumb;
The rest complain of cares to come.

The flowers do fade, and wanton fields
To wayward winter reckoning yields;
A honey tongue, a heart of gall,
Is fancy's spring, but sorrow's fall.

Thy gowns, thy shoes, thy bed of roses,
Thy cap, thy kirtle, and thy posies,
Soon break, soon wither, soon forgotten,
In folly ripe, in reason rotten.

Thy belt of straw and ivy buds,
Thy coral clasps and amber studs,
All these in me no means can move
To come to thee and be thy love.

But could youth last and love still breed,
Had joys no date nor age no need,
Then these delights my mind might move
To live with thee and be thy love.

Walter Raleigh (c. 1554-1618)

'To the Virgins, to Make Much of Time'

Gather ye rosebuds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying:
And this same flower that smiles to-day
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious lamp of heaven, the sun,
The higher he's a-getting,
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer;
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time,
And while ye may, go marry:
For having lost but once your prime,
You may for ever tarry.

Robert Herrick (publ. 1648)

'To Daffodils'

Fair daffodils, we weep to see
You haste away so soon;
As yet the early-rising sun
Has not attain'd his noon.
Stay, stay
Until the hasting day
Has run
But to the evensong;
And, having pray'd together, we
Will go with you along.
We have short time to stay, as you,
We have as short a spring;
As quick a growth to meet decay,
As you, or anything.
We die
As your hours do, and dry
Away
Like to the summer's rain;
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,
Ne'er to be found again.

Robert Herrick (publ. 1648)

2. Effects and poetic devices

- **assonance**: the repetition of a vowel
- **alliteration**: the repetition of an initial consonant
- **consonance**: the repetition of a final consonant
- **rhyme**: a similarity between the endings of lines of verse:
  - **half/sprung/oblique/imperfect rhyme**: two lines end with the same consonant(s) but these are preceded by different vowels.
  - **full/true/perfect rhyme**: two lines end with the same vowel and consonants.
  - **eye rhyme**: two lines have similar graphic endings but no consonance.
  - **masculine rhyme**: a rhyme consisting of a single accented syllable.
  - **feminine / double rhyme**: a rhyme consisting of a strong syllable followed by a weak one.
  - **internal rhyme**: similar word endings inside a single line
- **euphony** /ˈjuːfə.nɪ/: a pleasant impression produced by sounds. For example, assonances can create a **chiming** effect.
- **ca**ˈ**cophony**: an unpleasant impression produced by sounds. Cacophony is often produced by an accumulation of voiceless consonants, especially stops, and/or by the juxtaposition of different types of consonants, generally involving plosives and affricates.

3. Rhyme schemes

aa couplet rhyme/rhyming couplet/flat rhyme
abab alternate/cross rhyme
abba embracing/envelope rhyme

III – Poetic form

1. Stanza lengths

couplet < tercet < quatrain < sestet < septet < octet

2. Common forms

form		number of lines	meter	rhyme scheme	notes
heroic couplet → heroic verse		2	iambic pentameter	aa	Masculine rhymes. Often used in narrative poetry.
heroic/elegiac stanza		4		aabb/abab	
blank verse				none	Used in drama, narrative poetry (e.g. Milton's *Paradise Lost*). A monologue, a division of a play or poem in blank verse is often concluded by a heroic couplet.
ballad stanza	ballad metre	4	iambic tetrameter (1, 3), iambic trimeter (2, 4): 8.6.8.6 syllables	abcb	The ballad originated as a popular, "low" narrative genre. Ballad and common metres are often used in Protestant hymns.
	common metre			abab	
long metre			8.8.8.8	abab/abcb	Used in hymns.
short metre			6.6.8.6	abab/abcb	
spenserian stanza		9	8 iambic pentameters followed by one iambic hexameter	ababbcbcc	
chant royal		11		ababccddede	One chant royal consists of five such stanzas followed by an envoi (ddede or ccddede)
sonnet	Petrarchan	14	iambic pentameter	abba abba + • cde cde • cdc cdc • cd cd cd	The sonnet is traditionally divided in two parts: the **octave** (the two quatrains) and the **seste**t, between which line 9 acts as a **volta** (change or transition).
	Spenserian			abab bcbc cdcd ee	
	Shakespearean			abab cdcd efef gg	
	curtal	10 ½		abc abc dbc dc	invented by G M Hopkins
ode					A lyrical poem in three stanzas.
rondeau		15	iambic tetrameter	aabba aabc aabbac	l. 9 = l. 15 (refrain). They are half-lines.
terza rima			iambic pentameter	aba bcb cdc… yzy (zz)	
villanelle		19		aba x5 + abaa	1st refrain: ll. 1, 6, 12, 18 2nd refrain: ll. 3, 9, 15, 19

Shakespeare : *Sonnets* (pub. 1609)

This collection is a sequence of 154 sonnets. The first 17 encourage a young man to marry and beget children. Sonnets 18-126 express the poet's affection for a young man, the 'Fair Youth'. Sonnets 127-152 are addressed to the poet's mistress, the 'Dark Lady'.

30

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

43

When most I wink, then do mine eyes best see,
For all the day they view things unrespected;
But when I sleep, in dreams they look on thee,
And darkly bright, are bright in dark directed.
Then thou, whose shadow shadows doth make bright,
How would thy shadow's form form happy show
To the clear day with thy much clearer light,
When to unseeing eyes thy shade shines so!
How would, I say, mine eyes be blessed made
By looking on thee in the living day,
When in dead night thy fair imperfect shade
Through heavy sleep on sightless eyes doth stay!
All days are nights to see till I see thee,
And nights bright days when dreams do show thee me.

61

Is it thy will thy image should keep open
My heavy eyelids to the weary night?
Dost thou desire my slumbers should be broken,
While shadows like to thee do mock my sight?
Is it thy spirit that thou send'st from thee
So far from home into my deeds to pry,
To find out shames and idle hours in me,
The scope and tenor of thy jealousy?
O, no! thy love, though much, is not so great:
It is my love that keeps mine eye awake;
Mine own true love that doth my rest defeat,
To play the watchman ever for thy sake:
For thee watch I whilst thou dost wake elsewhere,
From me far off, with others all too near.

71

No longer mourn for me when I am dead
Then you shall hear the surly sullen bell
Give warning to the world that I am fled
From this vile world, with vilest worms to dwell:
Nay, if you read this line, remember not
The hand that writ it; for I love you so
That I in your sweet thoughts would be forgot
If thinking on me then should make you woe.
O, if, I say, you look upon this verse
When I perhaps compounded am with clay,
Do not so much as my poor name rehearse.
But let your love even with my life decay,
Lest the wise world should look into your moan
And mock you with me after I am gone.

91

Some glory in their birth, some in their skill,
Some in their wealth, some in their body's force,
Some in their garments though new-fangled ill;
Some in their hawks and hounds, some in their horse;
And every humour hath his adjunct pleasure,
Wherein it finds a joy above the rest:
But these particulars are not my measure,
All these I better in one general best.
Thy love is better than high birth to me,
Richer than wealth, prouder than garments' costs,
Of more delight than hawks and horses be;
And having thee, of all men's pride I boast:
Wretched in this alone, that thou mayst take
All this away, and me most wretched make.

92

But do thy worst to steal thyself away,
For term of life thou art assured mine;
And life no longer than thy love will stay,
For it depends upon that love of thine.
Then need I not to fear the worst of wrongs,
When in the least of them my life hath end.
I see a better state to me belongs
Than that which on thy humour doth depend:
Thou canst not vex me with inconstant mind,
Since that my life on thy revolt doth lie.
O! what a happy title do I find,
Happy to have thy love, happy to die!
But what's so blessed-fair that fears no blot?
Thou mayst be false, and yet I know it not.

96

Some say thy fault is youth, some wantonness;
Some say thy grace is youth and gentle sport;
Both grace and faults are lov'd of more and less:
Thou mak'st faults graces that to thee resort.
As on the finger of a throned queen
The basest jewel will be well esteem'd,
So are those errors that in thee are seen
To truths translated, and for true things deem'd.
How many lambs might the stern wolf betray,
If like a lamb he could his looks translate!
How many gazers mightst thou lead away,
If thou wouldst use the strength of all thy state!
But do not so; I love thee in such sort,
As, thou being mine, mine is thy good report.

104

To me, fair friend, you never can be old,
For as you were when first your eye I ey'd,
Such seems your beauty still. Three winters cold,
Have from the forests shook three summers' pride,
Three beauteous springs to yellow autumn turn'd,
In process of the seasons have I seen,
Three April perfumes in three hot Junes burn'd,
Since first I saw you fresh, which yet are green.
Ah! yet doth beauty like a dial-hand,
Steal from his figure, and no pace perceiv'd;
So your sweet hue, which methinks still doth stand,
Hath motion, and mine eye may be deceiv'd:
For fear of which, hear this thou age unbred:
Ere you were born was beauty's summer dead.

IV – Figures of speech

Poetic language is often figurative insofar as it refers to things, people or ideas not literally but figuratively, that is to say by mentioning other things, people or ideas.

- A **simile** /ˈsɪm.ɪ.lɪ/ is an explicit comparison between two terms:
  - "I am constant as the northern star" (Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*)
- A ˈ**metaphor** is an implicit comparison. The explicit subject of a metaphor (the image, the signifier) is called its **vehicle**. Its implicit subject (its signified) is called its **tenor**.

If the tenor of the metaphor is mentioned explicitly, the metaphor, taken literally, states or implies an identification between its vehicle and its tenor (what the metaphor actually refers to):

"All the world's a stage
And all the men and women merely players" (Shakespeare, *As You Like It*)

If the tenor is implicit, the vehicle replaces the tenor in the text:

"O, you are well tuned now!
But I'll set down the pegs that make this music" (Shakespeare, *Othello*)

To comment on a metaphor, you should:

- **elucidate** it, that is to say establish its meaning by identifying the vehicle and the tenor,
- study the **effects** of the metaphor.

If a metaphor is pursued through several points of comparison between the vehicle and the tenor, it is called an **extended metaphor**. A sophisticated, elaborate extended metaphor is called a **conceit**.

Everyday language uses many metaphors. A **dead metaphor** is one which is so common that people are no longer aware that they are metaphors: the source of a problem, the key to happiness, women's role in society...

When two metaphors are combined, there is a **mixed** metaphor. Mixed metaphors often result from the combination of dead metaphors, because the speaker or writer is not aware that he is using metaphors in the first place. "To play a key role" is both a dead metaphor and a mixed metaphor made of two dead metaphors.

- An ˈ**allegory** is a symbolical narrative or description.
- **Personification**: treating a non-human subject (such as an object, an animal or an idea) as a human being.
  - **Pathetic** ˈ**fallacy**: ascribing feelings to a non-human subject.
  - **Prosopo**ˈ**peia** /ˈpiː.ə/: words spoken by a non-human subject.
- **Me**ˈ**tonymy**: the thing or the person referred to is suggested by something associated to (contiguous) it/them.
- **Synecdoche** /sɪ.ˈnek.də.ki/: the thing or the person referred to is suggested by a part of it/them.

Analyse the metaphors in the following sentences:

- James Mason, John Gielgud and Marlon Brando played key roles in the Joseph Mankiewicz film of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*: Brutus, Cassius and Mark Antony.
- Oil plays a key role in the global economy.
- Thomas Wolsey played a key role in Henry VIII's government.

V – Poetic diction

The phrase "poetic diction" refers to the stylistic uses which are specific to poetry:

Vocabulary:

Archaic words: 'quoth he' for 'he said', 'yonder' for 'there'…
Latin words

Language: frequency of metaphors

Syntax:

Inversions of subject and verb, verb and object are more frequent than in prose, where they do not normally happen.

Archaic constructions:

negation in S V not ('I know not') instead of S Aux not V,
question in V S ('Know you?') instead of Aux S V
'(I) would that' for 'I wish that'

Use of the second person singular pronoun: thou /ðaʊ/ (subject), thee /ðiː/ (complement), thy /ðaɪ/ (possessive before a consonant), thine /ðaɪn/ (possessive before a vowel); conjugation: thou art / wast, thou hast / hadst, dost / didst, canst / couldst, shalt / shouldst, wilt / wouldst, regular verbs: -st.

William Blake

Songs of Innocence (1789)

'Introduction'
Piping down the valleys wild,
Piping songs of pleasant glee,
On a cloud I saw a child,
And he laughing said to me:

'Pipe a song about a Lamb!'
So I piped with merry cheer.
'Piper, pipe that song again.'
So I piped: he wept to hear.

'Drop thy pipe, thy happy pipe;
Sing thy songs of happy cheer:'
So I sung the same again,
While he wept with joy to hear.

'Piper, sit thee down and write
In a book, that all may read.'
So he vanish'd from my sight;
And I pluck'd a hollow reed,

And I made a rural pen,
And I stained the water clear,
And I wrote my happy songs
Every child may joy to hear.

'The Little Black Boy'
My mother bore me in the southern wild,
And I am black, but O! my soul is white
White as an angel is the English child:
But I am black as if bereav'd of light.

My mother taught me underneath a tree
And sitting down before the heat of day
She took me on her lap and kissed me,
And pointing to the east began to say:

Look on the rising sun: there God does live
And gives his light, and gives his heat away
And flowers and trees and beasts and men recieve
Comfort in morning joy in the noonday.

And we are put on earth a little space
That we may learn to bear the beams of love.
And these black bodies and this sunburnt face
Is but a cloud, and like a shady grove,

For when our souls have learn'd the heat to bear
The cloud will vanish we shall hear his voice,
Saying: come out from the grove my love & care
And round my golden tent like lambs rejoice.

Thus did my mother say and kissed me.
And thus I say to little English boy.
When I from black and he from white cloud free,
And round the tent of God like lambs we joy:

I'll shade him from the heat till he can bear
To lean in joy upon our fathers knee.
And then I'll stand and stroke his silver hair,
And be like him and he will then love me.

'The Little Chimney-Sweeper'
When my mother died I was very young,
And my father sold me while yet my tongue
Could scarcely cry ''weep! 'weep! 'weep! 'weep!'
So your chimneys I sweep, and in soot I sleep.

There's little Tom Dacre, who cried when his head,
That curl'd like a lamb's back, was shav'd: so I said
'Hush, Tom! never mind it, for when your head's bare
You know that the soot cannot spoil your white hair.'

And so he was quiet, and that very night,
As Tom was a-sleeping, he had such a sight!—
That thousands of sweepers, Dick, Joe, Ned, and Jack,
Were all of them lock'd up in coffins of black.

And by came an Angel who had a bright key,
And he open'd the coffins & set them all free;
Then down a green plain leaping, laughing, they run
And wash in a river, and shine in the Sun.

Then naked & white, all their bags left behind,
They rise upon clouds, and sport in the wind;
And the Angel told Tom, if he'd be a good boy,
He'd have God for his father, & never want joy.

And so Tom awoke; and we rose in the dark,
And got with our bags & our brushes to work.
Tho' the morning was cold, Tom was happy & warm;
So if all do their duty, they need not fear harm.

Songs of Experience (1794)

'The Little Chimney-Sweeper'
A little black thing among the snow:
Crying weep, weep, in notes of woe!
Where are thy father & mother? say?
They are both gone up to the church to pray.

Because I was happy upon the heath,
And smil'd among the winters snow:
They clothed me in the clothes of death,
And taught me to sing the notes of woe.

And because I am happy & dance & sing,
They think they have done me no injury:
And are gone to praise God & his Priest & King,
Who make up a heaven of our misery.

'The Tyger'
Tyger, Tyger, burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?

In what distant deeps or skies
Burnt the fire of thine eyes?
On what wings dare he aspire?
What the hand dare seize the fire?

And what shoulder, & what art,
Could twist the sinews of thy heart?
And when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand? & what dread feet?

What the hammer? what the chain,
In what furnace was thy brain?
What the anvil? what dread grasp
Dare its deadly terrors clasp?

When the stars threw down their spears
And water'd heaven with their tears:
Did he smile his work to see?
Did he who made the Lamb make thee?

Tyger, Tyger, burning bright
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?

When I consider how my light is spent
Ere half my days in this dark world and wide,
And that one talent which is death to hide
Lodg'd 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.'

John Milton, publ. 1673

'To a Butterfly'

Stay near me—do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!
Much converse do I find in thee,
Historian of my infancy!
Float near me; do not yet depart!
Dead times revive in thee:
Thou bring'st, gay creature as thou art!
A solemn image to my heart,
My father's family!

Oh! pleasant, pleasant were the days,
The time, when in our childish plays,
My sister Emmeline and I
Together chased the butterfly!
A very hunter did I rush
Upon the prey;—with leaps and springs
I followed on from brake to bush;
But she, God love her! feared to brush
The dust from off its wings.

William Wordsworth, written 1802

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

William Wordsworth, written 1804

'On First Looking into Chapman's Homer'

Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,
  And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;
  Round many western islands have I been
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told
  That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;
  Yet did I never breathe its pure serene
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies
  When a new planet swims into his ken;
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes
  He stared at the Pacific—and all his men
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—
  Silent, upon a peak in Darien.

John Keats, written 1816

'Chapman's Homer' refers to George Chapman's (c. 1559-1634) English translations of the Iliad *and the* Odyssey.

'Ozymandias'

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them on the sand,
Half sunk, a shatter'd visage lies, whose frown
And wrinkled lip and sneer of cold command
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamp'd on these lifeless things,
The hand that mock'd them and the heart that fed.
And on the pedestal these words appear:
"My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!"
Nothing beside remains: round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare,
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

Percy Bysshe Shelley, written 1817

'Alone'

From childhood's hour I have not been
As others were—I have not seen
As others saw—I could not bring
My passions from a common spring—
From the same source I have not taken
My sorrow—I could not awaken
My heart to joy at the same tone—
And all I lov'd—I lov'd alone—
Then—in my childhood—in the dawn
Of a most stormy life—was drawn
From ev'ry depth of good and ill
The mystery which binds me still—
From the torrent, or the fountain—
From the red cliff of the mountain—
From the sun that 'round me roll'd
In its autumn tint of gold—
From the lightning in the sky
As it pass'd me flying by—
From the thunder, and the storm—
And the cloud that took the form
(When the rest of Heaven was blue)
Of a demon in my view—

Edgar Allan Poe, written *circa* 1829

‘Kubla Khan; or, A Vision in a Dream: A Fragment’

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But O, that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover!
A savage place! as holy and enchanted
As e’er beneath a waning moon was haunted
By woman wailing for her demon-lover!
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil seething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,
A mighty fountain momently was forced:
Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst
Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher’s flail:
And ’mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
It flung up momently the sacred river.
Five miles meandering with a mazy motion
Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
Then reached the caverns measureless to man,
And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean;
And ’mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
Ancestral voices prophesying war!

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
Floated midway on the waves;
Where was heard the mingled measure
From the fountain and the caves.
It was a miracle of rare device,
A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice!

A damsel with a dulcimer
In a vision once I saw:
It was an Abyssinian maid
And on her dulcimer she played,
Singing of Mount Abora.
Could I revive within me
Her symphony and song,
To such a deep delight ’twould win me,
That with music loud and long,
I would build that dome in air,
That sunny dome! those caves of ice!
And all who heard should see them there,
And all should cry, Beware! Beware!
His flashing eyes, his floating hair!
Weave a circle round him thrice,
And close your eyes with holy dread
For he on honey-dew hath fed,
And drunk the milk of Paradise.

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (written 1797, publ. 1816)

Coleridge claimed that he had a vision of this poem in his sleep under the influence of opium, started to write it down when he woke up but was interrupted by ‘a person on business from Porlock’, which made him forget the rest of the poem.

From ***Sonnets from the Portuguese***

XLIII

How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday’s
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with the passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose
With my lost saints,—I love thee with the breath,
Smiles, tears, of all my life!—and, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.

Elizabeth Barrett Browning, written 1845

‘Remember’

Remember me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann’d:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts that once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.

Christina Rossetti, 1862

Pity me not because the light of day
At close of day no longer walks the sky;
Pity me not for beauties passed away
From field and thicket as the year goes by;
Pity me not the waning of the moon,
Nor that the ebbing tide goes out to sea,
Nor that a man’s desire is hushed so soon,
And you no longer look with love on me.
This have I known always: Love is no more
Than the wide blossom which the wind assails,
Than the great tide that treads the shifting shore,
Strewing fresh wreckage gathered in the gales:
Pity me that *the heart is slow to learn*
What the swift mind beholds at every turn.

Edna St. Vincent Millay, 1923

‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’

1.
Half a league, half a league,
Half a league onward,
All in the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.
“Forward, the Light Brigade!
“Charge for the guns!” he said:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

2.
“Forward, the Light Brigade!”
Was there a man dismay’d?
Not tho’ the soldier knew
Someone had blunder’d:
Theirs not to make reply,
Theirs not to reason why,
Theirs but to do and die:
Into the valley of Death
Rode the six hundred.

3.
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon in front of them
Volley’d and thunder’d;
Storm’d at with shot and shell,
Boldly they rode and well,
Into the jaws of Death,
Into the mouth of Hell
Rode the six hundred.

4.
Flash’d all their sabres bare,
Flash’d as they turn’d in air,
Sabring the gunners there,
Charging an army, while
All the world wonder’d:
Plunged in the battery-smoke
Right thro’ the line they broke;
Cossack and Russian
Reel’d from the sabre stroke
Shatter’d and sunder’d.
Then they rode back, but not
Not the six hundred.

5.
Cannon to right of them,
Cannon to left of them,
Cannon behind them
Volley’d and thunder’d;
Storm’d at with shot and shell,
While horse and hero fell,
They that had fought so well
Came thro’ the jaws of Death
Back from the mouth of Hell,
All that was left of them,
Left of six hundred.

6.
When can their glory fade?
O the wild charge they made!
All the world wondered.
Honor the charge they made,
Honor the Light Brigade,
Noble six hundred.

Alfred Tennyson, 1854

The subject matter is a military action which took place during the Crimean War.

‘My Last Duchess’

Ferrara

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf’s hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said
“Fra Pandolf” by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ’twas not
Her husband’s presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek; perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say, “Her mantle laps
Over my lady’s wrist too much,” or “Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat.” Such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate’er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, ’twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule
She rode with round the terrace—all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked
Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody’s gift. Who’d stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech—which I have not—to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, “Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark”—and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse—
E’en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene’er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will’t please you rise? We’ll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master’s known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretense
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter’s self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we’ll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Robert Browning, 1842

I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee;
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.

And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,
And evening full of the linnet's wings.

I will arise and go now, for always night and day
I hear lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,
I hear it in the deep heart's core.

William Butler Yeats, 1888

'Zoo Keeper's Wife'
I can stay awake all night, if need be—
Cold as an eel, without eyelids.
Like a dead lake the dark envelops me,
Blueblack, a spectacular plum-fruit.
No airbubbles start from my heart. I am lungless
And ugly, my belly a silk stocking
Where the heads and tails of my sisters decompose.
Look, they are melting like coins in the powerful juices—

The spidery jaws, the spine-bones bared for a moment
Like the white lines on a blueprint.
Should I stir, I think this pink and purple plastic
Guts-bag would clack like a child's rattle,
Old grievances jostling each other, so many loose teeth.
But what do you know about that
My fat pork, my marrowy sweetheart, face-to-the-wall?
Some things in this world are indigestible.

You wooed me with the wolf-headed fruit bats
Hanging from their scorched hooks in the moist
Fug of the Small Mammal House.
The armadillo dozed in his sandbin
Obscene and bald as a pig, the white mice
Multiplied to infinity like angels on a pinhead
Out of sheer boredom. Tangled in the sweat-wet sheets
I remembered the bloodied chicks and the quartered rabbits.

You checked the diet charts and took me to play
With the boa constrictor in the Fellows' Garden.
I pretended I was the Tree of Knowledge.
I entered your bible, I boarded your ark
With the sacred baboon in his wig and wax ears
And the bear-furred, bird-eating spider
Clambering round its glass box like an eight-fingered hand.
I can't get it out of my mind

How our courtship lit the tindery cages—
Your two-horned rhinoceros opened a mouth
Dirty as a bootsole and big as a hospital sink
For my cube of sugar: its bog breath
Gloved my arm to the elbow.
The snails blew kisses like black apples.
Nightly now I flog apes owls bears sheep
Over their iron stile. And still don't sleep.

Sylvia Plath (1932-1963)

'The Woman at Washington Zoo'
The saris go by me from the embassies.

Cloth from the moon. Cloth from another planet.
They look back at the leopard like the leopard.

And I. . . .
this print of mine, that has kept its color
Alive through so many cleanings; this dull null
Navy I wear to work, and wear from work, and so
To my bed, so to my grave, with no
Complaints, no comment: neither from my chief,
The Deputy Chief Assistant, nor his chief –
Only I complain. . . . this serviceable
Body that no sunlight dyes, no hand suffuses
But, dome-shadowed, withering among columns,
Wavy beneath fountains—small, far-off, shining
In the eyes of animals, these beings trapped
As I am trapped but not, themselves, the trap,
Aging, but without knowledge of their age,
Kept safe here, knowing not of death, for death—
Oh, bars of my own body, open, open!

The world goes by my cage and never sees me.
And there come not to me, as come to these,
The wild beasts, sparrows pecking the llamas' grain,
Pigeons settling on the bears' bread, buzzards
Tearing the meat the flies have clouded. . . .
Vulture,
When you come for the white rat that the foxes left,
Take off the red helmet of your head, the black
Wings that have shadowed me, and step to me as man:
The wild brother at whose feet the white wolves fawn,
To whose hand of power the great lioness
Stalks, purring. . . .
You know what I was,
You see what I am: change me, change me!

Randall Jarrell (1914-1965)