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ON THE MEASURES OF ENGLISH VERSE

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Abstract

The theory of English verse structure has never been completely formulated. Inheriting the lineage of both Germanic and Romance traditions, it nevertheless is a system in its own right. This paper explores, with examples from the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, the problems arising from the traditional attitude of English metrists up to the twentieth century to scan English verse from the viewpoint of Romance syllabotonic. To the contrary, I argue that English verse is driven, metrically and rhythmically, also by the Germanic accentual stress-timed system.

Key words: blending, Dickinson, English verse, pentameter, syllabotonic, stress-timed system, Wyatt.

1. Introduction

For almost five hundred years, since the early explorations of the nature of English meter in the sixteenth century, much work has been done in attempting to capture the principles by which English poets formulate their verse. In his survey of English metrics, Omond concludes:

All details of syllabic structure, vowel and consonant character, stress-value, 'tone-colour', expressional significance, and the rest, will find its place in a complete theory. Much has been already done in this regard, and much remains to do. But these things can rightly be seen only in the perspective of the whole. Our first need is to view verse intelligently as a composite total – now at length, looking back on the experience of Centuries, to discover what English verse really is (1968, p. 268).

In this paper, therefore, I venture some thoughts on what it is that enables the flexibility and variation of English verse as a whole: its ability to range over many genres and verse forms. Although I hesitate to assume that a "complete" theory can account for all manifestations recognized as English poetry, nevertheless, I am not content with simply enumerating them as syllabic, accentual, accentual-syllabic, quantitative, or free verse. I feel the need to discover what the common elements are that comprise English verse measure.

Meter is commonly understood as the underlying structure of alternation between strong and weak syllables in a poetic line, whereas rhythm results from applying variations of the underlying metrical form. More broadly, however, in Žirmunskij's terms, metrics "includes all questions pertaining to artistic regularity in the phonetic structure of verse (including orchestration and melodies)" (1966, p. 17). In this sense, if one explores what is meant by "all questions pertaining to artistic regularity", then one can see meter as measure, determined as much by phrasal grouping, sentence, line, and stanza as it is by stress alternation and phonetic structure. I therefore adopt the phrase "the *measures* of English verse" to avoid confusion with the narrower use of the term "metrics".

Historically, the rise of English metrical theory started at a time when literate England was emerging from the dominance of French as the official language of the aristocracy and legal courts. The early studies of meter thus depended largely upon the syllabic systems of Romance languages that significantly changed the character of older forms of English poetry. The fact that such influence was possible speaks to certain commonalities between the two systems, including "accent intensity" in group phrasing (Grévisse, 1957, p. 11). As Pensom, a French medieval scholar, argues: "A clear and continuing tradition emerges, spanning a thousand years in the writing of poetry in French. Far from accent being irrelevant to metre, as is widely assumed, patterns of alternating accent prove indispensable for the perception of metricality" (Pensom, 1998; 2018). I therefore use the phrase *syllabotonic* to capture the basic principles of Romance meter.

The attempt to account for English verse structure under alternating syllabic constraints created tension between the Germanic accentual forms evident in Old English poetry, with its pattern of four beats across two half-lines, and the influence of Romance syllabic forms in the language of Middle English. After experiments with various line lengths by earlier poets to accommodate French influence on English verse, it appeared that the iambic pentameter line afforded the most flexible possibilities for rhythmic variety, most evident in the works of Geoffrey Chaucer (Halle and Keyser, 1966).

In spite of the dominance of iambic pentameter in mainstream English poetry, so free had the measures of English verse become by the twentieth century that the journal *Agenda* sponsored a special questionnaire to survey several contemporary poets on the question of their techniques and attitudes for a special issue on rhythm (1972/3, p. 7-67).

Some of the poets who responded provided answers to the first question under "Metrical Verse" that reads: "How dead is the pentameter?" Their answers in the questionnaire as cited below reflect the importance of rhythmic structure to the flexibility of English iambic pentameter:

- The pentameter as an entity or absolute never existed. It lives or dies with the skill of the user. Pound's contention that it is finished applied chiefly to a debased Miltonic line. Stevens, Frost, Yeats, Lowell (shakily) and Larkin all prove that it is still alive and open to great varieties of voice and range (Peter Dale, p. 15).
- Metered verse in stanzas can use the stanza itself as a rhythmical unit, super-added to the free-verse units of the sentence and the verse line. [...] I am glad to have at hand both free-verse and the so often damned but still enduring blank-verse pentameter (Donald Davie, p. 18-19).
- I don't believe the pentameter or any other stress metre is dead. Only "poetic" language is dead. I believe, in fact, that poetry is generally in such a state of rhythmical uncertainty that stress metres will have to be rigorously revived" (Roy Fuller, p. 21-22).
- It is nonsense to say that meter is dead. It was never alive, it is an unembodied abstraction: it is the poem that has to be alive, and if a metrical poem is alive then the meter is the muscle of that living thing as much in 1972 as in 1600 (Thom Gunn, p. 23).
- If you mean the iambic pentameter, so-called, I do nothing to re-animate it. I'm not even sure it ever existed as an organic rhythmical unit, though it certainly served widely enough as a frame. Shakespeare's blank verse is the inescapable proof: the better it became, the fewer iambic pentameters it contained (Michael Hamburger, p. 27).
- In the first place I object to the use of the term pentameter, if by this is meant the five-stress line. Greek terminology is misleading as well as pedantic when used in relation to English verse (John Heath-Stubbs, p. 29).
- As for how dead the pentameter is, I should have thought it was alive though it is more in use as a background of rhythms the classical noise hammered out (Peter Levi, S.J., p. 38).
- I think that the pentameter as such, if not dead, is certainly very unhealthy (John Patchett, p. 43).
- The pentameter is NOT dead — no verse that lives in great poetry is ever dead, and no language. [...] But, as with all verse, if the passionate utterance does not inform it, it will be dead anyhow — let it be free as water (Tom Scott, p. 51).

- The pentameter is as dead as Larkin and Lowell. In the right hands no metrical form is dead. In the wrong hands all language is (Jon Stallworthy, p. 52).

In their own particular ways, the poets quoted above all speak to the problems I will discuss.

Most studies have assumed that Romance syllabotonic displaced the Germanic accentual stress-timed system of Old English poetry; for instance, Gasparov (1996, p. 184) notes that, with Chaucer, "English poetry had been given a new measure *that was free from the generic and stylistic traditions of the earlier one*" (my emphasis). As a result, the meter of poets like Thomas Wyatt, John Donne, John Webster, Emily Dickinson, and Gerard Manley Hopkins was considered "rough" if not downright unmetrical. Ben Jonson's (1619) famous comment to William Drummond on Donne's poetry is typical: "That Done [*sic*], for not keeping of accent, deserved hanging" (Patterson, 1923).

Halle and Keyser's (1971) theory of English meter established an advance from earlier studies by dispensing altogether with the classical notation of feet, notation that has always appeared problematically variable in scansion of an English poetic line. Based on a linguistic account of stress placement and still influenced by the dominance of the syllabotonic, Halle and Keyser's theory claimed to be able to distinguish metrical from unmetrical lines. Hascall (1974), however, collected over a hundred examples of English poetic practice that belies their claim. Subsequently, Attridge (1982; 1995) and Cureton (1992) produced theories that incorporated the possibilities of rhythmic variation that incidentally accounted for Hascall's "triple meter" examples in iambic pentameter. In his work, Tsur (1998) shows how important rhythmic phrasing and pitch are in characterizing the affective dimensions of the poetic line in both construction and performance.

In contrast to the theory that assumes Romance syllabotonic as the underlying structure for English meter, I see English verse as the child of two parents in Indo-European tradition: Romance (of which French syllabics, itself derived from the quantitative measures of classical Greek and Latin, is one example) and Germanic (the alliterative and accentual stress-timed meters of Old English poetry). Just as a child inherits features from both parents and their lineage, the child is nevertheless unique in its own right. The challenge, then, is to characterize that uniqueness.

With the development of cognitive linguistics in the latter half of the twentieth century, new tools became available to reconsider the nature of English verse. In particular, Fauconnier and Turner's (2002) "blending" theory shows how new structures can emerge from older forms. The term *blending* is shorthand for "conceptual integration network", a dynamic process involving "mental spaces" in which new information can emerge from relationships between and projections from the mental spaces of old information. It is therefore a model for creativity. The basic model consists of four temporally dynamic spaces, two of which, called "input spaces", include information from particular knowledge domains. A generic space contains isomorphic elements common to both input spaces that trigger the relationships between and projections from them into a blended space that has emergent structure, structure that exists in neither of the input spaces.

In the emergence of English verse structure, Germanic and Romance poetic language forms are the two domains whose elements constitute the input spaces. The generic space contains the isomorphic and isochronic elements shared by both poetic forms, which triggers the integration of some of their elements into the resulting blended space to create the emergent structure of English verse. The process is one of "double-scope" blending, where both spaces participate equivalently in governing the projection, a process that can produce clashes in the blend. In the case of my example of English verse as emergent structure, I shall argue that there is unequal time equivalence between the two projections, whereby Germanic principles which exist in the earlier forms of English poetry predominate and therefore underlie the later projections of Romance principles into the blend. This reversal from the dominant mode of considering English verse structure as primarily syllabotonic not only explains the metrical characteristics of lines that seem to violate syllabotonic principles, but establishes the influence of the accentual stress-timed system to create the flexibility and variation of English verse structure.

In this paper, therefore, I sketch out a very brief preliminary outline of how the measures of English verse are able to accommodate the range of possibilities available to the child that did not exist in either parent. I give a few examples, three hundred years apart, to show how the principles of stress-timing and rhythmic phrasing determine the metrical line in an early poet like Thomas Wyatt before turning to its further development in the poetry of Emily Dickinson.

2. The Measures of Thomas Wyatt

The publication of Thomas Wyatt's poems by Richard Tottel in 1557 shows clearly how the regular meters of the syllabotonic system dominated the accentual stress-timed system. As Thompson (1961, p. 15-29) documents in detailed analysis of Wyatt's *Satires*, Tottel regularized several of Wyatt's lines in order to "smooth" the meter and conform it to the syllabotonic principles of iambic pentameter. These changes included avoidance of clashing stresses by adding a syllable and regularizing the number of syllables. The following two examples show how Tottel accommodated Wyatt's original lines to the alternating pattern of iambic pentameter:

Stress adjustment:	It was no dreame: I lay brode waking (Wyatt) It was no dreame: for I lay broade awaking (Tottel)
Syllable adjustment:	That railleth rekles to every mans shame (Wyatt) That rayleth rechlesse unto ech mans shame (Tottel)

That such a bias toward syllabotonic regularity continued right up to the twentieth century can be seen in the following statements about Wyatt quoted by Thompson (1961, p. 16):

- He was a pioneer who fumbled in the linguistic difficulties that beset him (Tottel, 1929).
- He has been said to have followed a system of fantastic intricacy of his own invention, based on a misunderstanding of Chaucer (Foxwell, 1911).
- His metrically irregular lines have been presented as expressively effective, in an almost magical way, capable of creating a 'profound feeling of wonder' with a stress pattern (Tillyard, 1949).
- It has been said that he wrote as he did for the sake of a certain 'pausing' rhythm that is quite unrelated to the iambic principle (Harding, 1946).

Thompson understands Wyatt's metrical style as being dependent on the poet's characterization of "the quality of living speech" over the metrical regularity of parental Romance forms, rather than considering the influence of the earlier Germanic stress-timed system (1961, p. 29). As a result, he finds a total of thirteen lines from the *Satires*, nine of which meet the required ten syllable-to-position assignment, and the remaining four short by one, that have "irregular metrical stress patterns which cannot be excused in one way or the other" (1961, p. 27). However, all these lines reveal Wyatt's inner ear responding to the stress-timed pattern of parental Germanic, characterized by a four-beat line, phrasal grouping, stress rests, and a variable number of non-primary-stressed syllables between the beats.

Wyatt's ten-position lines identified by Thompson all have markedly four, not five, strong stress beats. Five of them are unmetrical by Halle and Keyser's stress maximum rule. A stress maximum occurs when a strong stress is bounded on either side by a non-stress syllable. According to the theory, when a stress maximum occurs on an odd position in an iambic pentameter line, it makes the line unmetrical. So, for instance, the following line is considered unmetrical because of the stress maximum of "continue" falling on the seventh position: "Mádde if ye líst to continúa your sóre". However, as both Hascall and Tsur have noted, many lines of English poetry contain such "unmetrical" stress maxima. The demand for five stresses also produces clashing stresses in three of the four nine-syllable lines, as in the following line: "And scórne the stóry that the knight tólde".

The apparent metrical irregularities in poets like Wyatt and Donne reveal certain patterns of phrasal grouping that rhythmically compensate for the lack of strict regularity of syllabotonic

meter. Caesura, or pauses in a syllabotonic line predominantly occur after the fourth or sixth position as Tsur has noted, thus creating a weak-to-strong/weak-to-strong alternating pattern and avoiding a chiasmic weak-to-strong/strong-to-weak pattern across the ten positions. In Wyatt, when a pausal break occurs syntactically after a strong stress, the following syllable can be either strong or weak, as the following ten-position lines show:

1. Ráther then to bé, / óútwardly to séme
2. From únder the stáll / without lándes or feíse

With the pauses in both these lines occurring after the fifth, odd position and not the fourth or sixth, the accepted reversal of stress after the pause in (1) creates a repeated rhythmic pattern with the triple non-stress syllables between the beats in both halves to reinforce the intended contrast between being and seeming. Any alteration to this line would destroy its effect, so that it is not surprising that Thompson (1961, p. 25) includes it among those "that cannot be brought into any relation with an iambic metrical pattern". Strangely enough, Tottel adjusts the line in (2), presumably to provide the "needed" fifth stress and to avoid a perceived stress clash in "withóut lándes", thus producing a twelve-syllable line with an unmetrical stress maximum on the ninth odd position: "From únder the stáll, withóuten lándes or feése".

Further consideration of Germanic metrical principles explains the earlier "unmetrical" lines quoted of nine syllables. Creed (1990) has persuasively argued for the existence of stress rests in the Old English poetic line which he suggests were marked in performance by the sound of the accompanying lyre. If the two lines in question are scanned according to this principle, even though they are freed from the alliterative and strict requirements of Old English metrics by the influence of Romance metrics on the iambic pentameter, one gets the following scansion, with the second evidencing a non-stress pause, much like the fermata in music:

/ ____ / (/) _____ /
 Madde if ye list | to continue your sore

/ / ◡ / /
 And scorne the story | that the knight tolde

Whether or not stress should be applied to a particular syllable and counted metrically depends upon its placement, both within a phrasal structure according to the rules of English language stress assignment and within the boundary of the metrical line. One complication in conforming the English line to Romance forms is the dominance of Germanic phonetic stress on the first syllable in words imported from French, as in *coúrage* versus *coráge*. In addition, the loosening of the alliterative requirement and placement of the beat in a stress-timed system that occurs with its integration with the syllabotonic allows for the greater variety of stress placement and alliteration that occurs in English verse. Its unique emergence as a system unto itself allows for an authorial construction of measured patterns that cannot be accounted for by the classical scansion of feet, but at the same time can be variously rendered according to speaker preference. That is why English verse accommodates different oral renditions without losing the sense of its metrically measured patterning.

3. The Measures of Emily Dickinson

Flash forward three hundred years, when poetic experimentation over the previous centuries had speeded up while regularity was still the norm. In 1855, Walt Whitman, generally considered "the father of free verse", self-published his first edition of *Leaves of Grass*. By the end of the century, Gerard Manley Hopkins, after seven years of Jesuit silence, had introduced "sprung rhythm" in his poem *The Wreck of the Deutschland* (1875), in which one can hear the accents and rhythms of Old English meter. The poem was deemed "unpublishable" by both his Jesuit community and his friend, Robert Bridges. When Bridges finally gathered Hopkins' poems together and published them in 1918,

he described *The Wreck of the Deutschland* as "a great dragon folded in the gate to forbid all entrance". Between them, Emily Dickinson was quietly distributing her poems to relatives and friends and compiling booklets (known as "fascicles") of her poems, poems that were not published until after her death.

Edited by Thomas Wentworth Higginson and Mabel Loomis Todd, the first publication of a selection of Dickinson's poems appeared in 1890. To make them more acceptable, the editors regularized the manuscript line breaks to the meters of hymnody, adjusting some of the poet's words to conform more closely with rhyme and syllabotonic tradition. In an article promoting the poetry, Todd conceded that the poet was "careless of form, scarcely thinking of the rhyme, *knowing or caring nothing of ancient accepted laws and customs in verse-making*" (qtd. in Buckingham 1989, p. 10; my emphasis). Indeed, many of Dickinson's first reviewers commented on her verse as lacking traditional metrical form, summed up succinctly by Arlo Bates: "There is evidence that Miss Dickinson was not without some vague feeling for metre and rhythm, yet she was apparently entirely unconscious that her own lines often had neither and constantly violated the canons of both" (qtd. in Buckingham 1989, p. 29).

Such commentary, relying as it does on the dominance of the Romance tradition in scansion of English verse, fails to see the development of English verse as freed from such absolute constraints without losing its grounding in the Germanic. It fails to see the progression of English verse in its maturity and growth as a system in its own right, giving rise to the multiple varied and flexible forms it evidences. It fails to recognize that Dickinson was in fact well-grounded in the principles of poetry, influenced by William Shakespeare and the King James Bible, and familiar with the works of many earlier and contemporary poets, including John Keats and Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning. To further my argument, therefore, in this section I show how Dickinson, like Wyatt and others, was hearing the temporal beat and rhythmic pulsations that drive the measures of her verse.

Dickinson's poems are particularly challenging. Since she never supervised her work in print, editors have to decide on whether line breaks in her manuscript are deliberate or simply runovers. They need to decide which version of a particular poem that exists in several different forms she would have chosen to publish. They need to decide which of various word and phrase alternates in one poem she would have chosen. They need to decide on whether an initial letter is capitalized or not, and how to deal with the various markings she made. When these are marks, editors choose to render them as dashes, though I prefer to call them markings, as they take on many different forms that are not clearly punctuation. Wylder (1971), correctly I think, identifies them as pronunciation guides, much as they occur in the rhetoric handbooks of Dickinson's school years.

The published versions of her poems to this day do not reflect her original composition. I therefore always work from Dickinson's manuscripts, most of which are now available to the public online, archived at Amherst College, marked "A", and at Harvard University, marked "H".

It is often assumed that Dickinson did not write in iambic pentameter. And yet several of her poems reveal her mastery of the form. Like her predecessors, Dickinson's poems reveal the strong pulse rhythm of four major stresses in a line, with several variantly stressed syllables in between (Zabuzhanska, 2017). Principles of Romance syllabotonic vary the stricter patterns of the Germanic stress-timed system, so that patterns of alliteration are more varied, and stress rests can occur at line end as well as elsewhere. She is particularly sensitive to phrasal grouping and the emotional effects caused by varied line length. Consider *A sepal, petal, and a thorn* (A 82 1/2):

- 1.1 A sepal - petal - and a thorn
- 1.2 Opon a common summer's morn -
- 1.3 A flask of Dew - a Bee or two -
- 1.4 A breeze - a caper in the trees -
- 1.5 And I'm a Rose!

The interaction, or better: integration or blending, of Germanic and Romance metrical structure creates the possibilities in the English poetic line for affective response created by rhythmic variation. Compare, for instance, the two systems in the first line. The break in line 1 is not considered significant in syllabotonic scansion, with strong stress falling on three s positions in the line—

/ / /
 A sepal - petal - and a thorn
 w s w s w s w s

—but becomes particularly significant if the missing stress is supplied in the four-stress system of Germanic meter:

/ / (/) /
 A sepal - petal - and a thorn
 w s w s w s w s

The principle of more than one syllable occupying one metrical position under certain constraints is a feature of syllabotonic meter. The stress rest sets off the phrase "and a thorn" from the preceding words and thus reinforces this aspect of the flower's description as a clue to the final line. In addition, it anticipates the stress movement of line 4, thereby increasing expectancy for resolution that occurs with the triumphant conclusion of the last line.

With no identified pauses, line 2 reads as syllabotonic regular. Inserted between lines 1 and 3, it foregrounds the stress-timing of these lines. Note what happens if it is placed first:

Opon a common summer's morn
 A sepal - petal - and a thorn

Not only is the focus of the poem now the common summer's morning and not the emergence of the rose, it obscures the contrast between what happens on a regular day (marked by syllabotonic meter) and the remarkable occasion of a rose's blossoming (marked by stress-timed meter).

Following Germanic stress, the third line falls into two parts of two stresses each, closed by two rhyming words, with the pause marking the break between them. The fourth line, although ostensibly like the third in structure, differs in placement of the pause and varies rhythmically with an anapestic movement in the second half of the line. The pause has the effect of setting off the two parts of the line, so that the missing stress appears to be lacking in the first part and not in position 6 as would be expected in a normal syllabotonic measure (this is reinforced by the rhyme scheme, underlined in the following scansion:

/ / / /
 A flask of Dew - a Bee or two -
 / / /
 A Breeze - a caper in the trees -

If line 4 were to be read simply as an iambic line with stress maxima in two positions and an unstressed syllable in the sixth S position, the rhythmic quality of the line would be lost. Thus, although a syllabotonic scansion shows that the line is perfectly regular:

/ / /
 A Breeze - a caper in the trees -
 w s w s w s w s

it does not capture the rhythmic quality of the line as a stress-timed scansion does:

x / (x) (/) x / x /
 A Breeze - a caper in the trees -
 w s w s w s w s

The stress pattern forces the crowding of the last half line in line 4, which iconically reflects the fast movement of "a caper".

According to strict Old English metrics, this scansion would be impermissible, since the strong beats do not occur at the beginning of each measure. It would seem, therefore, for English meter, the strict division of the line into the two-part Germanic measure is not an adequate representation of its metrical structure. The existence of the pause in line 4, at the place where we should expect a repetition of the structure in the preceding analogous line ("of Dew"), demands that the pattern be rhythmically provided. The insertion of the stress rests at the pause seems necessary to characterize its stress-timed metrical pattern, a pattern that also enables the position and phrasal reduction of primary stresses to be much more flexible.

Line 5 is a half line that provides the missing element of the pauses in lines 1 and 5, and the metrical effect of their stress suspension is to increase the expectancy of the climactic resolution given in the final line: "And I'm a Rose!"

The principles of interplay between Germanic four-stress and Romance five-stress patterns can be seen in a long poem that expresses the emotions aroused by the absence of the loved one. Dickinson's editors have regularized the line breaks by creating ten-position lines in the first and last stanzas. The manuscript (H 66) looks like this, with the markings represented by hyphens:

How sick - to wait - in any
 place - but thine -
 I knew last night - when
 someone tried to twine -
 Thinking - perhaps - that 5
 I looked tired - or alone -
 Or breaking - almost - with
 unspoken pain -

And I turned - ducal -
That right - was thine - 10
One port - suffices - for a
Brig - like mine -

Our's be the tossing - wild
 though the sea -
 Rather than a mooring - 15
 unshared by thee -
 Our's be the Cargo - unladen - here -
 Rather than the "spicy isles" -
 And thou - not there -

Dickinson's division of the poem into three stanzas creates an outer frame for the central stanza. The first stanza introduces the theme that, as we shall see, carries the emotive punch of the poem.

In the first stanza, the line breaks can understandably be seen as syntactic enjambment (runovers), so that the stanza can be regularized into ten-position lines. However, if the line breaks are also seen as metrical enjambment, the four-stress character of the lines becomes prominent, and one can experience the line breaks as including a pause that is a metrical diacritic, like the fermata in music:

 / / ◡ / /
 How sick - to wait - in any place - but thine -
 / / ◡ / /
 I knew last night - when someone tried to twine -

/ / ◡ / /
 Thinking - perhaps - that I looked tired - or alone -
 / / ◡ / /
 Or breaking - almost - with unspoken pain -

The stress rhythms indicated are those of the Germanic beat, even in the middle two lines which, under syllabotonic rules, would have five marked stresses.

Although the middle stanza in its short half lines with two stresses could also be rendered as ten-position lines, I think the editors were right to maintain its emotive affect as the central argument of the poem by maintaining Dickinson's line breaks (though they probably did so to maintain a pattern of four lines per stanza, instead of Dickinson's 8-4-7 structure):

/ /
 And I turned - ducal -
 / /
That right - was thine -
 / /
 One port - suffices - for a
 / /
Brig - like mine -

The last two lines show the flexibility of the English verse measure. Read together, they form a regular syllabotonic pentameter line with five stresses:

/ / / / /
One port - suffices - for a Brig - like mine

Such a reading, however, misses the rhythmic power of the Germanic, emphasized by Dickinson's underlining of the words carrying the strong beats. Just as congruent weakly stressed syllables can occupy one position under certain circumstances in syllabotonic meter, in Germanic as many as five (or more) syllables can occur between the stress beats. Although the verb carries stress in syllabotonic scansion, it is lowered a level in stress-timed scansion to reinforce the strong four-beat line.

The poem's final stanza then expands the argument. In this stanza, the additional characteristic of Germanic meter emerges: the existence of stress rests (Creed, 1990). Preference for the loved one is asserted by a typical Dickinsonian contrast: better to toss on a wild sea with the loved one than to share a safe mooring with someone else. If one considers the first four lines, as regularized by the editors, they form what look like regular syllabotonic ten-position (pentameter) measures. However, both are metrically problematic under the syllabotonic system.

In syllabotonic meter, the stress maximum principle does not allow for a strong stress to fall on a weak position when bounded on both sides by weak syllables. The first (lines 13-14) has only nine syllables, ending with a strong stress, so that an optional first empty position would make the line unmetrical by making "the tossing" a stress maximum. Likewise, if the ten syllables of the next two lines (15-16) occupy ten positions, the line is unmetrical by the stress maximum on "a Mooring". Both problems are resolved by scanning the line according to Germanic stress principles as follows:

/ / / ◡ /
 ll. 13-14 Our's be the tossing - wild - though the sea -
 / / (/) /
 ll. 15-16 Rather than a Mooring - unshared by thee -

Here, the contrast between being and not being with the loved one is reflected in the difference between the metrical diacritic pause at the line break of the first line and the stress rest inserted at the line break of the second: a contrast between Germanic predominating in the first and the possible syllabotonic scansion in the second. The fact that Dickinson placed "wild" with pausal markings on either side *before* rather than after the line break as in all the other lines makes it an outlier, thus foregrounding its stress and making it the "eye" of the poem. One thinks of Dickinson's other poem *Wild nights* (H 38).

A similar pattern of contrast occurs in the final lines, where the final two lines (18-19) can also, as in the previous line, be scanned as a syllabotonic iambic pentameter:

/ / ◡ / /

11. 17 Our's be the Cargo - unladen - here -

/ / / /

11. 18-19 Rather than the "spicy isles" - And thou - not there -

Neutralization of stress level occurs across the three strong-stressed words in the final line. An alternative scansion would reduce the stress on "isles" and move the beat to the following line:

/ / ◡

Rather than the "spicy isles" -

/ /

And thou - not there -

It is significant that line 17 is the only line in the poem that does not have the customary line break after the fifth position, thus emphasizing the affect of the poem's theme. Dickinson squeezed the wording on her page to fit them in, whereas, in the following lines, the line break emphasizes the power of the final line of the poem: "And thou - not there -".

Instead of the charge of unmetricality, these examples show how the growth and development of the measures of English verse culminate in Emily Dickinson at her most skillful in manipulating the demands of the meter to create emotive affect.

4. Conclusions

Although conformity to a stricter metricality of the syllabotonic line has influenced the regularization of poetry creation in English throughout the centuries, it is the example of poets that hear and respond to its Germanic origins that has created the increased flexibility of the English poetic measure that resonates in all the different forms of English verse structure. The fact that the iambic pentameter is still very much alive, as attested by the poets quoted in the introduction, as well as the many contemporary examples in English poetry, speaks to its accommodation to, or rather, its emergence from Old English metrical principles.

The requirement of English verse to conform to the dominating pattern of alternating stress within an iambic pentameter line results from the assumption that projection of the Romance syllabotonic system into the blend should override the clash in the blend that otherwise occurs with the corresponding projection of the Germanic stress-timed system. If, however, it is understood that, to the contrary, the double projection produces an emergent structure that is different from both parents, then there is no reason to demand strict requirement for either Germanic or Romance principles to dominate.

The intuitive response that one hears four prominent beats in English metrical verse, and the occurrence of multiple non-stress or lesser-stressed syllables between those beats, even in iambic pentameter, speaks to the flexibility and variation that neither parent has but that emerges in the child. Cureton (1992) has persuasively established four-beat structure as the pulse underlying English

rhythmic verse forms. And there is no reason to demand that a poem as a whole should consist of a set number of positions per line. Even within mainstream poetic forms, variation in line length can provide needed emphasis, as both Chaucer and Shakespeare well knew.

Although valuable work has been done in recent years, notably by Attridge, Cureton, and Tsur, the conclusion still remains that the unique character of English verse measure, that child of two parents, Germanic and Romance, has still not been theoretically absolutely determined. It is my hope that this paper points the way toward more investigation in developing an adequate theory for the measures of English verse.

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Résumé

This paper is a preliminary sketch toward developing a theory of English verse. By the twentieth century, English verse had become so flexible and varied in its forms that the question was even raised as to the death of the English pentameter. Contemporary poets' responses to that question reveal that although the English pentameter is very much alive, a complete theory of English verse still

has not been written. Historically, English metrical studies have based their theory on the assumption that the French Romance tradition of syllable alternation displaced the Germanic stress-timed system of Old English poetry. As a result, many lines of poetry written in iambic pentameter are considered unmetrical. The paper explores two examples of English poetry from the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries to show that, far from being metrically irregular, as claimed by most English metrists, they reflect a lineage from Old English metrical forms. Using Conceptual Integration Theory (or "blending" as it is commonly known in cognitive linguistics), the paper shows that English verse is the child of two parents, Germanic and Romance, whose emergent structure in the blend exists in neither parent. In analysis of examples from Thomas Wyatt's and Emily Dickinson's poetry, it is evident that the Germanic stress-timed system, modified by Romance syllabotonic, guides the rhythmic beat of the English metrical line. Building on the work of recent scholars in versification studies, the paper notes that a complete theory of the measures of English poetry still needs to be developed.

Key words: blending, Dickinson, English verse, pentameter, syllabotonic, stress-timed system, Wyatt.

Анотація

Запропоноване дослідження є попереднім нарисом до розробки теорії англійського віршування. До XX ст. англійський вірш був настільки флексивний і варіативний у своїх формах, що поставало питання про так звану "смерть" англійського пентаметра. Реакція сучасних поетів на такий феномен показала, що хоча й англійський пентаметр усе ще залишається вживаним, сама теорія англійського віршотворення досліджена недостатньо. Історично склалася думка, що вивчення англійської метричності засновано на припущенні, що франко-романський зсув складу замінив германську пентаметричну систему давньої англійської поезії. У результаті – строфи, написані ямбовим пентаметром, вважаються не метричними. У цій праці проаналізовано два приклади англійської поезії XVI та XIX століть для ілюстрації того, що вони, на противагу поглядам більшості англійських метристів, відображають наявність метричної лінії англійського вірша як нової структури. Відповідно до теорії концептуальної інтеграції (відомої широкому колу когнітивних лінгвістів як "блендинг"), у статті доводиться, що англійський вірш походить від двох мовних систем віршотворення – германської і романської – та його структура утворена внаслідок блендингу й не схожа на жодного зі своїх "батьків". Аналіз прикладів поезії Томаса Ваєта та Емілі Дікінсон свідчить про те, що германська метрична система, модифікована романською силабо-тонічною системою віршування, визначає ритміку англійської метричної лінії. До XX століття англійський вірш набув настільки гнучких і різноманітних форм, що навіть було висловлено припущення щодо занепаду англійського пентаметра. Висновок до представленого в статті аналізу, у якому містяться відповіді сучасних поетів на це питання, показує, що хоча англійський пентаметр ще існує, теорію вивчення англійської віршованої системи повністю ще не досліджено.

Ключові слова: блендинг, Дікінсон, англійський вірш, силабо-тонічний, пентаметр, Ваєт.

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