

CHAPTER 6

PROSODY

علم العروض

Prosody is the form in which poetry is presented. It is also called versification **النظم**, which is how to make a group of lines **أبيات**, called verse, characterised by rhythm **الإيقاع** and rhyme **التقاف** so as to give poetry its distinctive music.

Arab students find some difficulty in understanding English versification **النظم**. At heart, there is really not much difference, for both rely on rhythm and rhyme to produce their musical effects. But while Arabic verse depends on the regular repetition of units called "تفعيلات" (which are derivatives of the verb **تعل**), English verse depends on the regular repetition of units called "feet" composed of stressed **مبصرة** and unstressed **غير مبصرة** syllables. Arabic verse has the same rhyme at the end of every line, while English verse has a different scheme for its several kinds of poetry; for example in the "heroic couplet" we find that every two lines have the same rhyming syllable at their ends, while in the "Ballad" **الفصحة الشعرية**, we find the lines in groups of four, and within that group we find that every second and fourth lines rhyme together. Another difference is that the Arabic line is divided into two parts called **مصراعين أو شطرين**, but there is, usually, no such division in the English line. The fourth difference is that the Arabic poem, whatever its length, is in one piece, while the English poem is usually divided into units called stanzas **مقطوعات**, having exactly the same form. The fifth difference is that the Arabic poem corresponds to the English Lyrical Poetry, but English poetry has many other kinds, that were not present in Arabic poetry until lately, as the Comedy **المسألة أو التراجيديا**, Tragedy **المأساة أو التراجيديا**, Epic **قصص الحب والمغامرات** or Romance **قصص الملحمية**.

Feet **التفعيلات** in English poetry:

By foot, we mean a specific arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables. Syllables following one another are like the rhythm of a drum beating time. If we represent the hard beat by "tum", and the soft beat by "te", and represent the accented syllable, which corresponds to the hard beat, by bold type; and represent the unaccented syllable, which represents the soft beat, by plain type; then we will find, when we read poetry aloud,

that poetry is akin to drum beats. In scansion (essentially telling which syllables are stressed and which are not), the following signs were used: (-) for the stressed syllable, and, (◡) for the unstressed. These signs were to be annotated above the corresponding syllables. Now, other signs are suggested; these are: (/) for the stressed syllable, and (x) for the unstressed one. Some combine the two methods using (◡) for the unstressed syllable, and (/) for the stressed one.

Now listen to the following drum beats or feet:

1. Iambus (te-tum or x/) المجرى

(Gr. *iambos*, from *iaptein*, to assail, this metre being first used by writers of satire)

This is the commonest foot in English verse.

examples: **beneath, become, until, enrage**

x / x / x / x /

Come **live** | with **me** | and **be** | my **love**. (Marlow)

Look, how it sounds like a drum beat?

te **tum** | te **tum** | te **tum** | te **tum**

2. Trochee (tum-te or /x) الراكض أو الراقص

(Gr. *trochaios*, running, tripping - *trochos*, a running - *trechein*, to run)

examples: **unit, boundless, parish, issue**

Double, | **double**, | **toil** and | **trouble**,

Fire | **burn** and | **cauldron** | **bubble**.

(Shakespeare, Macbeth)

3. Dactyl (tum-te-te or x/) النقر بالأصابع

(L. *dactylus* - Gr. *daktylos*, a finger)

examples: **manifold, intercourse, ruminant**

All that re | **mains** of her

Now is pure | **wo** man ly

4. Anapaest (Anapest) (te-te-tum or xx/) المعكوس

(Gr. *anapaistos*, reversed, because it is the dactyl reversed)

examples: **supersede, understand**

The Assyr | ian came **down** | like a **wolf** | on the **fold**

And his **co** | horts were **gleam** | ing in **pur** | ple and **gold**.

Occasionally the following are used:

5. Amphibrach (te-tum-te or x/x) قصير اليدين

(L. - Gr. made up of Gr. *amphi*, on each side, *brachys*, short.)

examples: **important, procession, arrangement**

We can scan **نقطع أو نقسم إلى تعجيلات** the line: "*He sang the bold anthem of Eringobragh*" as three amphibrachs and one iambus:

He **sang** the | **bold an** them | of **Er** in | go **bragh**

or we can scan it as follows:

He **sang** | the **bold an** | them of **Er** | in go **bragh**

One iambus followed by three anapests. So, we can do without the amphibrach and also the following feet.

6. Amphimacer (tum-te-tum or /x/) طويل البدين

(Gr. *amphi*, on each side, *makros*, long)

example: **summertime**

Strikes his thun | **dering hoofs** | **like a proud** | **high bred racer.**

7. Spondee (tum-tum or //) المنسكب أو النخعي

(Gr. *sponde*, or drink offering - from *spendein*, to pour out, make a libation - because it was much used in the slow solemn hymns sung at a spondee)

examples: **child-hood, book-case**

One, two, (spondee)
Buckle my shoe. (amphimacer)
Three, four, (spondee)
Shut the door. (amphimacer)
(Nursery rhyme)

This is an example of sprung verse where each line has the same number of stressed syllables. *One, two* and *Three, four* are spondees.

8. Pyrrhic (te-te or xx) الرقص الحروي

(Gr. *pyrrhiche*, a kind of war dance, so called from *Pyrrhichos*, the inventor. Some ascribe the name to king Pyrrhus who won his battles at severe losses, hence the idiom Pyrrhic victory.)

This foot appeared in classical poetry which depended upon the time taken by vowel sounds, but is not accepted in English verse which depend upon stress.

S. T. Coleridge cleverly illustrated these feet in the following poem which you may do well to memorise:

Trochee trips from **long to short;** (/x)
From long to short in solemn sort
Slow spon | **dee stalks;** | **strong foot!** | Yet ill able (//)(x/x)
Ever to | **come up with** | **Dactyl tri** | **syllable.** (//xx)

Iambics march from **short** to **long**; (x/)
 With a **leap** and a **pound** the swift **anapests throng**;(xx/)
 One syllable long with one short at each side.
Amphibrachys hastes with a **stately stride**; (x/x)
First and last being long, middle short, Amphimacer (/x/)
Strikes his thundering hoofs like a proud high bred racer.
 Metrical Feet

The metre (measure) بحر أو ميزان الشعر:

The metre is the arrangement of syllables in such an order in order as to form verse. So, the metre of a poem depends on the number of feet *التفعيلات* to the line *البيت* and the pattern of the stanzas *المقطوعات* as well as the kind of feet used.

A line containing one foot is called a **monometer** أحادي التفعيلة

” ” ”	two feet	”	dimeter	”	ثنائي
” ” ”	three	”	trimeter	”	ثلاثي
” ” ”	four	”	tetrameter	”	رباعي
” ” ”	five	”	pentameter	”	خماسي
” ” ”	six	”	hexameter	”	سداسي
” ” ”	seven	”	heptameter	”	سباعي
” ” ”	eight	”	octameter	”	ثمان

In *Sprung Rhythm* (same number of stressed syllables in the line, the unstressed syllables varies.) and *Free Verse* (irregular metrical pattern), stress is still the basis of the rhythm; but here, three, four, or more slack syllables may be grouped with each stressed one.

Examples:

- Is **this** | a **fast**, | to **keep** (Iambic Trimetric)
 The **lard** | er **lean** (Iambic Dimetric)
 And **clean**? (Iambic Monometric)
- The **Po** | et **to** | the **end** | of **time**,
 Breathes **in** | his **work** | and **lives** | in **rhyme**;
 (Iambic tetrametric)
- Waking echoes**
With their clamour
Slowly tolling
Bells resounded
High above us. (Trochaic dimeter)

Stanzas المقاطع الشعرية:

If we look at a long poem we will find it divided into smaller units; each unit comprising several rhyming lines. These units are called "stanzas", and they have the same form in the poem.

A stanza (sometimes called "verse") is anything longer than a **couplet** which comprises two lines, but:

a three line stanza is called a	triplet
a four " " " " "	quatrain
a five " " " " "	quintette
a six " " " " "	sextain or sestet
a seven " " " " "	septette
an eight " " " " an	octave

To sum up, we find that the building blocks of English poetry are the **syllables** (stressed and unstressed) which are grouped up into **feet**, a number of feet makes a **line**, several lines make a **stanza**, and lastly several stanzas make a **poem**.

The chief English Stanzas are :

a. *Ballad Metre*

Four line stanzas (quatrains) consisting of alternate iambic tetrameters and trimeters and rhyming *abcb*.

"Childe Maurice hunted the Silver Wood. a
He whistled and he sang: b
'I think I see the woman yonder c
That I have loved lang.'" b
Childe Maurice

b. *The Heroic Couplet*

Iambic pentameter rhyming *aa, bb, cc*, etc. (i.e. in couplets).

"And now, unveiled, the toilet stands displayed. a
Each silver vase in mystic order laid, a
First, robed in white the Nymph intent adores. b
With head uncovered, the Cosmetic Pow'rs." b
The Rape of the Lock.

c. *Blank Verse*

Unrhymed iambic pentameters.

"Of man's first disobedience and the fruit	a
Of that forbidden Tree, whose mortal taste	b
Brought death into the world and all our woe,	c
With loss of Eden, till one greater Man	d
Restore us, and regain the blissful seat.	e
Sing, Heavenly Muse."	f

Paradise Lost

d. *Spencerian Stanza*

Nine-lined stanza consisting of eight iambic pentameters (octave) followed by one Alexandrine (iambic hexameter). Rhymes *ab-ab-bc-bc-c*.

"Lo I the man, whose Muse whilome did maske,	a
As time her taught, in lowly Shepherds weeds!	b
Am now enforst a far unfitter taske,	a
For trumpets stern to change mine Oaten reeds.	b
And sing of Knights and Ladies gentle deeds!	b
Whose praises having slept in silence long,	c
Me, all too meane. the sacred Muse areeds	b
To blazon broad amongst her learned throng:	c
Fierce warres and faithfull loves shall mornlize my song."	c

Faerie Queene

e. *Sonnet*

An arrangement of fourteen Iambic Pentameters. Several varieties are recognised:

- (1) **Italian or Petrarchan:** 8+6: Octave (eight lines) rhyming: *Ababa Ababa* + sestet (six lines) with variable rhyming: *cdecde*, or, *cdcdcd*.
- (2) **English or Shakespearean:** 4+4+4+2: three quatrains (four lines) and a couplet (two lines) rhyming thus: *abab, cdcd, efef, gg*.
- (3) **Spencerian:** Like the English sonnet but it rhymes: *abab, bcbc, cdcd, ee*.

The first part (or parts) of a sonnet usually an idea; from the ninth line there is a development of the idea, whilst the last part contains comments or conclusions.

f. *Rhyme Royal*

Seven iambic pentameters rhyming *ab-ab-bc-c*.

"The double sorwe of Troilus to tellen,	a
That was the kyng Priamus sone of Troye,	b

His ministers of vengeance and pursuit
Back to the gates of Heaven."

Paradise Lost

d. Weak Ending

The slack, or unstressed, tenth syllable in an unrhymed iambic pentameter.

" Since what I am to say must be but that
Which contradicts my accusation, *and*
But what comes from myself."

The Winter's Tale

e. Feminine Ending

The slack, or unstressed, eleventh syllable in an unrhymed iambic pentameter.

"If you would not so,
You pity not The state, nor the remembrance
Of his most sovereign name."

The Winter's Tale

f. Hypermetric Syllables المقاطع الزائدة

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

"And, when **once** | the young **heart** | of a **maid** | *en* is **stol** | *en*,
The maid | *en* herself | will steal aft | er it soon."
The syllable *en* in *stolen* is hypermetric.

g. Catalexis حذف المقطع

When a line has an incomplete last foot, it is called catalectic:

"The **moon** | *looks*
On **man** | y **brooks**,
The **brook** | can see | no **moon** | but **this**."

The first line is catalectic.

h. Slurred Vowels دغم حروف العنة

This consists of suppressing the final vowel when a word ending in a sounded vowel is followed by a vowel.

"His **puis** | sance **trust** | ing **in** | the **Almigh** | ty's **aid**."

The *e* and *A* of *the Almighty* are slurred together making them one syllable. This device removes a syllable.

i. Sounding unsounded syllables نطق مقطع غير منطوق

This is the practice of sounding syllables that are usually silent. *E.g. beloved; charmèd; trancéd; such words are usually past participles.*

"For I myself shall like to this decay,

And eke | my name | be wip | èd out | like | wise." (Spencer)

Wiped is usually sounded as one syllable, but by putting an accent on the (e) the poet directs us to sound it.

This device adds a syllable.

j. Omitting a vowel إلقاء حرف متحرك

Here the poet omits a vowel, usually to get rid of a syllable. *e.g.:* among → 'mong; memories → mem'ries.

" 't Is with | our judge | ment as | our wat | ches, none

Go just alike, yet each believe his own." (Pope)

It is are two syllables, they are made into one *'t is*.

These last three devices are used by poets to correct the metrical feet.

KINDS OF POETRY

There are many kinds of English poetry; and for study purposes, we divide them into:

a. Lyrical Poetry الشعر العاطفي

Short and intensely personal and passionate poems; e.g. sonnet (السوناتة الصوت), ode (extended lyric) (القصيدة الممدودة), hymn (ترنمة), elegy (الرثاء والحزن), song (الأغنية).

Lyrical poetry is intended for recitation or singing, and it was originally accompanied with a lyre.

- **Sonnet:** A lyric poem of 14 lines. See kinds of Stanzas.
- **Ode:** This is an elaborate lyric, expressing exalted or enthusiastic emotion, expressed in a language that is imaginative, dignified and sincere. Pindar, the Greek poet, divided the ode into parts corresponding to three movements by the chorus: strophe (moving to right), antistrophe (moving to left) and epode (standing still). Horace, the Roman poet, divided the ode into uniform stanzas, and his subject was more personal and private. There are other irregular forms of odes like Wordsworth's *Intimations of Immortality*.
- **Elegy:** This is a lyric poem about death and serious subjective poetic meditations. The language is dignified, and the mood is sad. Classic elegies were couplets in dactylic hexameters and pentameters.
- **Song:** A lyric poem intended for singing accompanied with music. They are usually short, simple and emotional.
- **Hymn:** A lyric poem expressing religious feelings, and intended to be sung by a chorus.

b Dramatic Poetry الشعر التمثيلي

Comedy (المهزلة أو الكوميديا), Tragedy (المأساة أو التراجيديا), Masque (المسرحية المقنعة), Monologue (الحدث الحديث). All these have in common the use of characters and an attempt to represent the speech and actions of human beings.

- **Comedy:** A form of drama that is intended to amuse, and that ends happily. Old comedies were in verse.
- **Tragedy:** A serious play in which the hero engages in conflict, experiences great suffering, and is defeated in the end.
- **Masque:** This was a play and dance with masked actors. Milton's *Comus* is one of the best known masques.
- **Monologue:** An oral or written composition in which only one person speaks. Browning's *My last Duchess* is written in monologue form.

c. Narrative Poetry الشعر القصصي

Poetry which tells a story, as: Ballad قصيدة قصصية, epic الملحمة and romance الحب والمغامرات.

- **Ballad** (short tales in verse): " A form of verse, intended for singing or recitation, and presenting a dramatic or exciting episode in simple narrative form. It is one of the earliest folklore poetry to develop.
- **Epic**: A long narrative poem presenting heroic characters who take part in a series of adventures, over an extended period of time. The story is presented in dignified and majestic language. examples are: Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeniad*, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Spencer's *Faerie Queene*, and Milton's *Paradise Lost*.
- **Romance**: A fictitious story about knights, their ladies and adventures. Examples are: Sir Gawain and the Green Knight, and Le Roman de la Rose. In modern usage, a love or an adventure story is called a romance.

d. Didactic Poetry الشعر التعليمي

Poetry which teaches; as: Allegory القصة الرمزية and Satire المحاء.

- **Allegory**: Poetry or prose in which the characters, events or objects are represented symbolically, so that the story conveys a meaning deeper than the actual incident or characters described. An example is Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel*.
- **Satire**: Verse or prose blending a critical attitude with wit and humour. The purpose of satire is to ridicule frailties in persons, customs or institutions, and by causing laughter, inspire the desire for correction. An example is Pope's *Dunciad*.

e. Descriptive Poetry الشعر الوصفي

Direct description of scenes and places as well as: Pastoral الشعر الرعوى, eclogue الأنشودة الرعوية أو الخيالية and idyll المحاوراة الرعوية.

- **Pastoral**: poetry dealing with a "golden age" in which the main characters are idealised shepherds and shepherdesses.
- **Eclogue**: consisting of dialogues between "pastoral" shepherds.
- **Idyll**: smooth and idealised description of rural or domestic life.

f. Humorous Poetry الشعر الفكاهي

- **Burlesque** التحقير الفكاهي: poetry which ridicules serious ideas or things.

- **Mock-epic** الملمحة الساخرة: This literary form makes fun of epics by treating trivial subjects in a pompous manner. An example is Pope's *Rape of the Lock*.
- **Parody** المحاكاة التهكمية: poetry which imitates the style of another poet with the intent to poke fun at it.

g. Low Poetry الشعر المنحط

- **Macaronic verse** مزيج من لغتين: A mixture of two languages made for fun.
- **Doggerel** الشعر المكسور: Any poorly executed verse.
- **Flyting** مباراة شعرية فى السباب: This is versified abuse, usually in a quarrel in poetry between poets

Scansion

Scansion تقطيع النظم is the study of the mechanical elements used by the poet to establish his rhythmical effects. So, to scan a piece of verse, we have to show the accented and the unaccented syllables, then we have to group these syllables into feet and show the number of feet used and their type (the metre), and lastly, we have to show the kind of stanza employed.

Example:

x / x / x / x / x /
 "And still | she slept | and az | ure-lid | ded sleep
 x / x / x / x / x /
 In blanch | ed lin | en, smooth | and lav | en derd,
 x / x / x / x / x /
 While he | from forth | the clos | et brought | a heap
 x / x / x / x / x /
 Of can | died ap | ple, quince, | and plum, | and gourd;
 x / x / x / x / x /
 With jel | lies sooth | er than | the cream | y curd,
 x / x / x / x / x /
 And lu | cent syr | ops tinct | with cin | na mon;
 / x x / x / x / x /
 Man na | and dates | in ar | go sy | trans ferred
 x / x / x / x / x /
 From Fez; | and spic | ed dain | ties ev | ery one
 x / x / x / x / x / x /
 From silk | en Sam | ar cand | to ce | dared Leb | a non."

The Scansion:

The foot القدم أو الضغيلة: The pattern is predominantly composed of one unaccented syllable (x) followed by an accented one (/); so, the feet are *iambic*. There is one exception: the first foot of the seventh line consists of an accented syllable followed by an unaccented one, i.e. a *trochee*.

The Metre الميزان أو البحر: There are five feet to the line; so, the lines are *iambic pentameters*. There is one exception: The ninth line consists of six iambic feet, so it is a *hexameter* or an *Alexandrine*.

The Stanza نوع المقطوعة: This consists of eight iambic pentameters (an octave) followed by an Alexandrine, i.e. a *Spencerian stanza*.

EXERCISES

Scan the following verses:

1. "Here's a sigh for those who love me,
And a smile to those who hate;
And whatever sky's above me,
Here's a heart for any fate." (Byron)
2. "One rose of the wilderness left on its stalk
To mark where a garden had been." (Thomas Campbell)
3. "He that loves a rosy cheek,
Or a coral lip admires,
Or from star-like eyes doth seek
Fuel to maintain his fires,
As old Time makes these decay,
So his flames must waste away." (Thomas Carew)
4. "For the human heart is the mirror
Of the things that are near and far;
Like the wave that reflects in its bosom
The flower and the distant star." (Alice Cary)
5. "But sorrow returned with the dawning of morn
And the voice in my dreaming ear melted away."
(Thomas Campbell)
6. "My heart's in the Highlands, my heart is not here,
My heart's in the Highlands, a-chasing the deer;
A-chasing the wild deer, and following the roe -
My heart's in the Highlands wherever I go." (Burns)
7. "Every man will be thy friend
Whilst thou hast wherewith to spend:
But, if store of crowns be scant,
No man will supply thy want." (R. Barnfield)
8. "Go, lovely Rose!
Tell her that wastes her time and me,
That now she knows,
When I resemble her to thee,
How sweet and fair she seems to be." (Edmund Waller)

9. "Evil, like a rolling stone upon a mountain-top,
A child may first impel, a giant cannot stop."
(Archbishop Trench)
10. "There was gorging Jack and guzzling Jimmy,
And the youngest he was little Billie."
(W. M. Thackeray)
11. "Charlotte, having seen his body,
Borne before her on a shutter,
Like a well-conducted person,
Went on cutting bread and butter."
(W. M. Thackeray)
12. "Now to the banquet we press;
Now for the eggs and the ham!
Now for the mustard and cress!
Now for the strawberry jam!
Now for the tea of our host
Now for the rollicking bun!
Now for the muffins and toast !
Now for the gay Sally Lunn!"
(Gilbert)