

## *Glossary of Terms Commonly Employed in Versification*

*alliteration.* Correspondence of sounds at the beginning of syllables (usually accented syllables) that are close together: "The plowman homeward plods his weary way." Some writers confine the use of the term to consonant sounds and include initial repetition of vowels under *assonance*.

*anapest.* A foot of three syllables with accent on the third.

*anaphora.* Repetition of one or more words at the beginning of successive clauses or phrases.

*assonance.* Repetition of a vowel sound in consecutive or nearby words. Also, in a broad sense, any repetition of sound in nearby words: "As withereth the Primrose by the river."

*ballad meter* or *ballad stanza.* These terms commonly designate a quatrain of alternating four- and three-stress lines, with the second and fourth rhyming (*abcb*). This is sometimes printed as a couplet of seven-foot lines. The term is also used for the same quatrain with alternate rhyme (*abab*).

*blank verse.* Unrhymed iambic pentameter. Nominally, any unrhymed metrical verse, but in English practice the term is regularly confined to pentameter lines.

*caesura.* An internal pause in a line of verse, usually a pause required by the meaning.

*consonance.* Repetition of consonant sounds elsewhere than at the beginning of syllables: "Parched, he lurched to the bar." This kind of repetition, however, is most often included under the general term *assonance*.

*couplet.* A unit of two lines rhyming with each other; they are usually of the same length.

*dactyl.* A foot of three syllables with accent on the first.

*dimeter.* A line consisting of two feet.

*elegy.* See the introduction and notes to Chapter VII.  
*enjambment.* See *run-on line*.

*feminine ending.* An extra, unstressed syllable at the end of an iambic or anapestic line.

*feminine rhyme.* See *rhyme*.

*foot.* The unit of conventional English verse. It usually consists of either two or three syllables.

*free verse.* Verse that follows no regular metrical scheme.

*heroic couplet.* Iambic pentameter rhyming in couplets. Some writers confine the use of the term to the "closed" couplet, in which the two rhyming lines form an independent unit of thought or a complete sentence.

*hexameter.* A line consisting of six feet.

*iamb* (noun), *iambic* (adj.). (The adjectival form is commoner than the noun). A foot of two syllables with accent on the second.

*lyric.* See the introduction to Chapter IV.

*masculine rhyme.* See *rhyme*.

✧ *metaphor.* In its narrow sense, a metaphor is an implied (not expressed) comparison between unlike things. "A shower of leaves" is a metaphor: leaves are essentially unlike rain, but one resemblance is seized upon. A metaphor may imply the comparison by taking for granted the identity of two things, as in this example where, by the mere use of the word *shower*, the identity of leaves and rain is implied. Or the identity of unlike things may be stated outright as if it were a fact, as in saying "Joe is a pig," in order to express vividly his greed. See *simile*.

In recent years the term *metaphor* has come to be used in a much broader sense for almost all nonliteral statement. It is even applied to language itself because, unlike such things as pictures, which can represent objects by imitating them, language is by nature symbolic. The word *hat*, for example, does not resemble a hat; it is an arbitrary sign, quite unlike the object, yet representing it. See also the "Introduction."

*ode*. See the introduction to Chapter VII.

*onomatopoeia*. The use of sounds that by imitation suggest the meaning, as in the words *buzz*, *hiss*, *bubble*. This is a device more commonly discussed in the classroom than actually used by poets, for there are very few genuinely onomatopoeic words.

*ottava rima*. An eight-line stanza of iambic pentameter, rhyming *abababcc*.

*pentameter*. A line consisting of five feet.

*pyrrhic*. A foot made up of two unaccented syllables.

*quatrain*. Any four-line stanza.

*rhyme* (or *rime*). See the introduction to Chapter II. In its broadest sense (rarely used) the term may refer to any repetition of the sounds of words. Commonly it means *end-rhyme*, repetition at the ends of lines. It consists usually in the matching of sounds beginning with an accented vowel and continuing to the end of the word; *blow*, *go*; *haul*, *maul*; *dart*, *apart*; *destroy*, *joy*. These are masculine, or one-syllable rhymes, by far the most common in English verse. *Feminine* or *double rhyme* occurs in lines with feminine endings, when the last two syllables rhyme (*reeling*, *peeling*). Triple, or three-syllable rhyme (*bearable*, *wearable*) is uncommon except in comic verse. *Internal rhyme* occurs when one or both rhymes are within the line instead of at the end:

We were the *first* that ever *burst*  
Into that silent sea.

*rhyme royal*. A stanza consisting of seven lines of iambic pentameter, rhyming *ababbcc*.

★ *run-on line* (*enjambment*). A line in which the sense runs on to the following line without a noticeable pause, as in

Dust to the dust! but the pure spirit shall flow  
Back to the burning fountain whence it came.

★ *simile*. An expressed comparison between unlike things. A simile differs from a metaphor in being introduced by "like" or "as." For one of the most famous similes in modern poetry, see the opening lines of Eliot's "Prufrock."

*sonnet*. See the introduction to Chapter V.

*Spenserian stanza*. A stanza of nine lines. The first eight are iambic pentameter, the ninth is hexameter. The rhyme is *ababbcbcc*.

*spondee* (noun), *spondaic* (adj.). A foot of two syllables, both accented.

*synecdoche*. A figure of speech in which a part stands for the whole or the whole for a part (or any similar substitution): e.g., the "pair of ragged claws" in "Prufrock."

*tercet*. A stanza of three lines.

*terza rima*. A three-line stanza or group of lines in which the middle one is linked by rhyme to the following group. *aba/bcb/cdc*, and so on. For an example, see Shelley's "Ode to the West Wind."

*tetrameter*. A line consisting of four feet.

*trimeter*. A line consisting of three feet.

*trochee* (noun), *trochaic* (adj.). A foot of two syllables with an accent on the first.