

MÉTRICA AUTÓCTONA^{1*}

Por

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1. Versifying in Ibero-Romance

THE authors of medieval texts, as Michel Garcia notes (1978: 48), intended them to be read, or sung, aloud: when books were rare and expensive and literacy limited, reading silently and alone was a luxury. Many of the medieval Hispanic texts that have survived are in verse, and their authors made this choice for a number of reasons. The first of these was doubtless that verse, with its regular rhythms, gives both poets and audiences added aesthetic satisfaction; a second was that verse serves as a memory aid for performers (see Gaur 1984: 25); and a third was probably that a fixed form and repetition have traditionally been held to endow human utterances with mystic power: magic spells work only if every word is in the correct place (see Bowra 1963: 39 and West 1973: 186). Since versifying is an almost universal human activity and predates literacy (see Bowra 1963: 14-17), the inhabitants of medieval Iberia composed, heard, and repeated verse, the vast majority

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of which has been irretrievably lost. The texts that survive represent the tiny minority that had the good fortune to be written down and preserved.

Verse texts are ‘numerically regulated’ (Lotz 1960: 135), which is to say that they involve counting, and the defining property of verse is the *line*, a unit that stretches from where the count begins to where it ends (Fabb 2002: 48-49). In some verse the lines are grouped in larger units called strophes and the discipline of *metrics* is the study of the structure of both strophes (termed *strophe design*) and lines (termed *verse design*). Since many verse texts are not divided into strophes, verse design is clearly the structure most important to metrists, many of whom now follow Roman Jakobson (1960: 364) in using that term to refer to an individual metre, the set of rules or constraints that a poet observes, when crafting language into a particular passage of verse. A verse design, in this sense, can be inferred from the study of the lines themselves (*verse instances*), and may be regarded as having two constituents: a *template* and a set of *correspondence rules*, which govern the type of linguistic material in verse instances that may correspond to different positions in the template. Metres may be divided into two types, which Nigel Fabb terms *counting metres* and *patterning metres* (1997: 56-61); in counting metres lines contain a regular number of some linguistic unit: phrases, words, syllables, stresses, or moras (the minimum units of time a syllable can occupy); in patterning metres contrasting types of the same linguistic unit, usually the syllable, are grouped in a regular pattern; for example, long syllables may be contrasted with short, stressed with unstressed, and level-tone with changing-tone.² Metrists must therefore identify the regularities in the texts they examine, whether of count or pattern, and test them for statistical significance; only then can they offer an opinion on how the poet was counting or patterning the language of any given text.

The ways that poets versify is governed partly by personal choice, partly by fashion, but mainly by the language of the

² Roman Jakobson argued that all types of verse depend on a binary contrast of some sort and that in counting metres this is the contrast between the edges and the nuclei of the units counted (1960: 359-60).

text, since we can count or pattern only linguistic features that the language itself possesses: it is obvious that in a language without dynamic accent you cannot count stresses, and you cannot count tone-contrasts in a language that lacks them. As well as eschewing the impossible, poets also usually avoid the unnecessarily difficult: metres that restrict the proportion of the poet's lexicon that may be employed are less likely to survive. Kristin Hanson and Paul Kiparsky coined the term *the principle of fit* to describe the way that metres tend to evolve in such a way as to accommodate the lexicon of the language (1996: 294), but the term could equally well be applied to the other point I have made: that metres can count or pattern only the features that exist in the language concerned. Thus Hanson & Kiparsky quote the insight of John Thompson (1961) that metre is 'language imitating itself' (1996: 325). Although this must be borne in mind in any attempt to identify the metre of a verse text, so too must some sociolinguistic factors: thus, for example, although modern French poets do not pattern word stress, since that language no longer has this feature, they still count word-final schwas, because they were syllabified until the sixteenth century, when word-final *e-atone* became the modern *e-muet*, and this archaic feature has been preserved in poetry and drama.

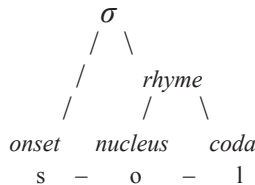
Although Arabic, Basque, and Hebrew were also spoken in medieval Iberia, the languages with which this book deals are all varieties of Ibero-Romance (see Penny 2000: 19-35), which evolved from Peninsular Latin (see Entwistle 1962: 46-82 and Penny 2002: 8-14). The people who spoke them were Romano-Visigoths who were conquered by the Moors in the eighth century and finally emerged from their rule in the fifteenth. Their language was significantly enriched by this protracted political and social contact (see Lapesa 1984: 129-56), but their grammar remained entirely, and their lexicon overwhelmingly, Romance (see Elcock 1975: 410-59). Although the earliest surviving texts that capture the sounds of Ibero-Romance in phonetic characters date from only very late in the twelfth century, there is a fair measure of agreement among scholars on the most important

features of its medieval varieties.³ Since counting or patterning those features is likely to have formed the basis of versifying in the earliest Ibero-Romance, we can identify the types of metre available to its poets by examining those features and invoking the principle of fit.

2. Counting Syllables

Speakers of all languages intuitively divide the speech stream into *syllables* (see Abercrombie 1967: 34-41), and the syllable has been defined as ‘a unit of pronunciation typically larger than a single sound and smaller than a word’ (Crystal 1985: 297). The syllable may be regarded as a series of *phonemes*, single sounds that can differentiate meaning (see Hogg & McCully 1987: 35-41), which give the syllable its structure (see Harris 1983: 1-80). Linguists often represent this structure by a tree diagram, as in Figure 1 below, which analyses the Spanish monosyllable *sol*, using σ to signify the whole syllable:

FIGURE 1
Syllable Structure in Spanish



Note that some syllables have no onset, some no coda, and some have neither (examples are the Spanish monosyllables *al*, *la*, and *a*, respectively), while onsets may contain two consonants (as in the first syllable of *pra-do*) and nuclei a diphthong (as in

³ Roger Wright has argued that for many centuries previously the Western Romance languages were written down using Latin orthography (see Wright 1982 and 1994). In such a logographic writing system the Castilian *prado* and the French *pré* would both be written ‘pratum’; a similar system is found in English, where the disyllabic place names *Diyel* and *Lester* are written ‘Dalziel’ and ‘Leicester’. Wright argues that Late Latin was simply the written form of Early Romance, and that *ladino* is the most appropriate term to describe the varieties of Romance spoken in early medieval Iberia (2002: 236).

the first of *pie-dra*). All syllables, therefore, are not equal, and in delivery some occupy more time than others, which is measured in moras, a *light* syllable being held to occupy one mora and a *heavy* syllable two (see Crystal 1985: 198). In Spanish a syllable is *light* if its nucleus consists of a vowel followed by no more than one consonant, and *heavy* if it consists of a diphthong, or a vowel followed by two or more consonants.⁴ The contents of the onset do not affect syllable weight; thus the first syllable of *pra-do* is light, while that of *par-do* is heavy.

Syllable weight determines the theoretical time it takes to deliver a syllable, but in practice differing speech habits often ensure that individual deliveries of the same utterance vary. The speakers of some languages exhibit a tendency to equalize the time they take to deliver each syllable, which makes syllable counting easier (see Section 4). But there are many complications facing the versifier who decides to count syllables: they may be light or heavy, and *accented* or *unaccented* (see 4 below); they may also be deleted in some circumstances (*syncope* and *apocope*), and two adjacent syllable nuclei may be pronounced separately (termed *diaeresis* when it occurs within words, and *hiatus* when it occurs at word boundaries) or merged to form a single syllable (termed *synaeresis* and *synaloepha*). Poets who count syllables must deal with all these difficulties and also overcome a more basic cognitive problem: syllables are relatively small linguistic units and utterances normally contain many of them. But, as modern research shows, people intuitively register numbers only up to three (see Hurford 1987: 93-95) and, even with training, people can quickly recognize numbers only up to seven or eight (see Miller 1956: *passim*). In order, therefore, to count syllables accurately poets and their audiences need to break long lines up into smaller units: and, when those smaller units form into patterns, a more complex, or patterning, metre evolves.⁵ Nor is

⁴ The technical definition of a heavy syllable is one with a *branching rhyme*, as demonstrated in the diagram of Figure 1. In continuous speech a single final consonant is usually combined with any following vowel to make a new syllable; this is termed re-syllabification (see Harris 1983: 43-44).

⁵ Fabb 2002: 51 gives an example of an Australian tribe that can count only up to three, but can versify in lines of six syllables or more; its poets must therefore perceive (and describe) their six-syllable lines as containing a pair of threes or a trio of twos.

such evolution an irreversible process: a pattern may be lost, as was the case with the quantitative patterns of Classical Latin verse (see Lote 1939: 220-58), and new methods of counting and patterning developed.

A close examination of syllables, and of the nature of counting, suggests that counting syllables is not the only, nor necessarily the best, solution to the problem of how to versify. Nevertheless, counting syllables has been a feature of many of the verse texts in the Indo-European languages, including the oldest, which exhibit many similarities in their metres (see Pighi 1970: 5-8, West 1973b, and Fabb 1997: 64-68).⁶ Syllable counting has also been a feature of versifying in the Romance languages for hundreds of years, and in Spanish almost all verse composed between 1500 and 1900 was syllabically regular. It is, therefore, not surprising that some modern metrists have regarded syllable counting as the norm in the Iberian languages, and have categorized all other types as *versificación irregular* or even *ametría* (Navarro Tomás 1974: 80).⁷ But, as Henríquez Ureña 1933 demonstrated, a great deal of Ibero-Romance verse is undoubtedly syllabically irregular. Furthermore, the regularity of a high proportion of lines in many other poems is challengeable: lines that are perfectly regular in modern editions are irregular in some or all of the surviving witnesses on which they are based (see Wright 2002: 122 and Duffell 1999c, 2002a, 2003a, and 2004a). There is therefore a strong case that some medieval Iberian poets counted things other than syllables in their versifying.

⁶ Some writers go further and argue that all Indo-European metres evolved from syllable counting metres, and that syllabically irregular metres result from linguistic changes such as syncope and final-vowel deletion (see, for example, Meillet 1923, West 1973b, and Gasparov 1996: 7-10). But accentual metres are more likely to have evolved from counting words, not syllables, as I have argued in detail elsewhere (Duffell 2004b: 79-82). The predominance of syllable-counting metres in surviving texts doubtless owes much to the invention of syllabic scripts such as Devanagari and Linear B, which re-enforced aural regularity with visual and made the accurate counting of long lines much easier.

⁷ See Gómez Rea 1988 for a modern example of a manual of metrics for students that classifies all types of metre on the basis of syllable count alone.

3. Counting Other Linguistic Units

The other linguistic units that versifiers can count are members of what linguists term the prosodic hierarchy (see, for example, Getty 2002: 7), units of which the smallest is the mora and the largest the intonational phrase. In the oldest surviving verse texts in any language the poets count phrases, of which lines contain usually two, but sometimes three.⁸ This type of metre is known as *parallelismus membrorum*, and the parallel units employed are of three semantic types, usually termed *sameness*, *contrast*, and *complementary parallelism* (see Preminger et al. 1975: 337). This semantic structure survives translation: English speakers know this type of metre from the Authorized Version of the Bible and from the verse of poets like William Blake (b. 1757, d. 1827; in Bronowski 1958) and Walt Whitman (b. 1819, d. 1892; in Hall 1968), who were strongly influenced by the biblical rhythms.⁹ The most common form of phrase-level regulation found in Romance verse is the division of longer lines into *cola* or *hemistichs* by a *caesura*, a regular mid-line word boundary. Caesurae usually divide the line into two phrases: and this counting of phrases aids the counting of smaller units, by offering the opportunity to begin the count again (which is important in view of the limitations on human counting noted above).¹⁰ Thus French metrists have always held that lines of

⁸ Counting phrases is the basis of Sumerian, Egyptian, Babylonian, and Semitic verse of the third millennium bc; it is also employed in the earliest surviving verse text in an Indo-European language, the Hittite *Song of Ullikummi*. This poem was composed in the second millennium bc, and some scholars argue that its metre is the result of the poet's imitating Semitic models (see West 1973: 182).

⁹ Examples of the three semantic types from the Authorized Version (Smith 1611) include: 'They part my garments among them/and cast lots upon my vesture' (Psalm 22.18), 'The conies are but a feeble folk/yet they make their houses in the rock' (Proverbs 30.26), and 'Stay me with flagons/comfort me with apples/for I am sick of love' (Song of Solomon 2.5). Blake's *A Song of Liberty* begins: 'The Eternal Female groaned/it was heard all over the Earth/ Albion's coast is sick, silent/the American meadows faint' (Hall 1968). Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* begins 'I celebrate myself/and I sing myself/and what I assume/you shall assume' (Bronowski 1958).

¹⁰ Counting phrases is usually combined with other types of counting because, on its own, it cannot satisfy the human appetite for ever more elaborate structures. Cola are quite large units of linguistic material and, while audiences readily identify multiples of two or three of them, they would find lines containing six cola (and no other regulation) amorphous and confusing.

more than eight syllables must contain a caesura dividing them into at least two cola (see, for example, Dorchain 1919: 178, Scott 1980: 28, and Cornulier 1995: 47). Many of the earliest surviving Ibero-Romance lines are similarly divisible into two cola.

Poets may also base their lines on a count of the units at the lowest level of the prosodic hierarchy, moras. The most straightforward example of mora counting is Japanese verse, although it is often described as syllabic (see, for example, Bownas 1964: xlv, and Preminger et al. 1975: 423-31). Brower (1972: 38), Fabb (1997: 58), and Getty (2002: 10), however, identify Japanese metres correctly as moraic, since heavy syllables (in Japanese, those with long vowels) are counted as two (see Dunn & Yanada 1958: 3); thus a seven-mora line has six syllables if it contains a heavy syllable, and five if it contains two.¹¹ All Japanese lines contain either five or seven moras and the two most popular verse forms combine the two lengths: the 17-mora *haiku* has lines of 5, 7, and 5, and the 31-mora *tanka* has lines of 5, 7, 5, 7, and 7. Mora counting in most Indo-European languages is more complicated because many more of their syllables have branching rhymes (unlike Japanese syllables, they have codas and often contain diphthongs). Nevertheless, a whole class of Ancient Greek metres (termed *Ionic*) are based on lines that have a variable number of syllables, but the same number of moras (see Gasparov 1996: 70-82). Thus the lines of Homer's *Iliad* contain between 12 and 17 syllables, but they comprise exactly 24 moras (except that the last is optional).

Remarkably, Classical Latin poets jettisoned their native metrical system and adopted Greek quantitative metres, both *Ionic*, which counted moras, and *Aeolic*, which counted syllables, but fixed the weight of those in certain positions in the line (see Gasparov 1996: 54-58). Medieval Latin poets cultivated quantitative verse at the same time as developing new types of metre, and the ability to versify quantitatively in Latin and

¹¹ Accent, of any type, is of little significance in Japanese (Dunn & Yanada 1958: 5) and Japanese metre imitates the language in this respect (Brower 1972: 39). The earliest (pre-literate) Japanese verse was rather less regular than the metres described here (see Bownas 1964: xlvi and Preminger et al. 1975: 423).

Greek remained the mark of a good scholar for many centuries (see Waquet 2001: 130). Some poets have attempted to compose quantitative verse in modern European languages, including Sir Philip Sidney (b. 1554, d. 1586) in English (see Hanson 2001), and Sinibaldo Mas (b. 1809, d. 1868) in Spanish (see Domínguez Caparrós 2001). The inspiration for such imitations was the success of Greek metrics in colonizing Classical Latin verse, even though the Latin lexicon had a very different distribution of light and heavy syllables. But quantitative metres met far bigger obstacles in English, where some syllables are very much reduced in pronunciation and some consonants are sometimes not pronounced at all, and in Spanish, where vowel length is not phonemic and varies considerably in individual deliveries. Since the loss of vowel-length distinctions occurred early in the development of Ibero-Romance (see Penny 2002: 45), medieval Hispanic poets could hardly count moras when they versified, and we find no evidence of such counting in the surviving texts.

Phrases and moras are at the extremes of the prosodic hierarchy, but there are also units at intermediate levels that poets may count other than syllables. One such unit is the word: some Ancient Hebrew poets counted words as well as phrases; thus the Hebrew original of the well-known line ‘A time to weep/and a time to laugh’ (Ecclesiastes 3.4) contains two pairs of words (see Preminger et al. 1975: 337). Counting words has also been shown to be the basis of versifying among primitive peoples (see Bowra 1963: 32), and is found in some of the oldest texts produced in Western Europe. Thus the number of words appears to be the chief form of regulation in the earliest surviving verse in both Celtic (Pighi 1970: 18 and Meyer 1909: 2-4) and the Italic languages (Gildersleeve & Lodge 1953: 462).¹² As Norberg points out, early Medieval Latin versifiers also composed lines in which the number of words, rather than syllables, was

¹² The non-Latin metre known as *numerus italicus* seems to have been verbal, as does the only surviving Latin verse that may be argued to antedate Greek influence, the Saturnian metre (Raven 1965: 17), of which fewer than 200 lines have survived (Koster 1929). Many hypotheses have been proposed to account for this metre (see Gasparov 1996: 68-70), but word counting offers the simplest explanation of all the surviving lines, which comprise 3 + 2 lexical words (see Nougaret 1948: 23, Pighi 1970: 24, and Preminger & Brogan 1993: 1117).

regulated (1958: 131-33). The lines of these poems contained 3, 4, 2 + 2, or 3 + 3 words, and they date from a period when instinctive knowledge of vowel length and accent in Classical Latin was restricted to a tiny minority of speakers and writers (Lote 1939: 219-71). But basing a metrics on word-count alone has a weakness: word boundaries easily disappear in continuous speech as final consonants are resyllabified. This blurring of boundaries hinders poets' and audiences' perception of verbal metres, especially in any language where words have another feature more salient than their boundaries. Words in the Ibero-Romance languages have just such a feature: *dynamic accent*, or *stress*. A line of four lexical words is a line of four stresses, and verbal metres are the most likely origin of metres in which poets count accents (see Duffell 2004b: 79-84). A discussion of dynamic accent, or *stress*, leads naturally to the subject of patterning metres.

4. *Counting and Patterning Accents*

In languages with dynamic accent some syllables are made more prominent in delivery than others: such syllables are called stressed, or accented, and they include lexical monosyllables and one lexically fixed syllable in each polysyllabic word (for an analysis of which syllables are stressed in Spanish see Navarro 1925). Stress is phonemic, in the sense that it can distinguish meanings; for example, between the Spanish *hablo* and *habló*. Modern research has shown that stress is a product of a change in pitch (fundamental frequency), greater articulatory force (detected as an increase in volume), and greater duration (see Fry 1958, Quilis 1971, and Penny 2002: 42). The stress accruing to the most prominent syllable of polysyllabic words is referred to as *primary stress*, and in longer words other syllables can also be made more prominent in delivery than their neighbours; in Ibero-Romance these syllables with *secondary stress* cannot be adjacent to their word's primary stress.

For many years scholars disagreed on the number of degrees of stress to be found in any given language, but modern linguistics holds that stress is relative: syllables have either more or less stress than their neighbours (see, for example, Tavani 1974: 135-

36 and Liberman & Prince 1977). This relative stress, termed *strength*, divides syllables into *strong* (s) and *weak* (w), and syllables of the two types form a hierarchy within both words and phrases. James Harris represents stress structure in Spanish using tree diagrams (1983: 96), but more recent analyses of stress, such as Hayes 1995, prefer grids in which a syllable's stress is marked by an x at each level in the hierarchy. Figure 2 below gives Harris's examples with Hayes's grids above them, and the strong/weak contrasts involved beneath them (upper case indicates primary stress):

FIGURE 2

Relative Stress in Spanish

		x							
		x	x				x		
	x	x	x	x			x		
gra-	ma-ti-	ca-li-	dad		ge-	ne-ra-	ti-vo		
w	s w	s w	S		s	w w	S w		

As Figure 2 demonstrates, secondary stress generally falls either two places or three from primary stress. Note that metrists use the terms *duple-time* to describe the linguistic rhythm produced when the interval between prominent syllables is one syllable, and *triple-time* for that produced by an interval of two. Fabb & Halle 2005 argues that these two rhythms are the basis of all patterning in verse: in languages with melodic accent (based on pitch alone) these rhythms may be created by the patterning of level- and changing-tone-syllables, as in Chinese (see Fabb 1997: 77-79), or of long and short syllables, as in Ancient Greek (see the discussion of syllable weight above). But in languages with dynamic accent they are primarily the result of stress contrasts. Modern metrics borrows the classical terms for the patterns that result from these contrasts, which occur in both languages and verse texts. The contrast itself is referred to as a *foot*, and duple-time feet are called *iamb*s if they are right-strong (w s), or *trochee*s if they are left-strong (s w); similarly,

triple-time feet may be *anapaests* (w w s), *dactyls* (s w w), or *amphibrachs* (w s w).¹³

The most obvious feature of the earliest surviving Germanic lines are two pairs of stresses, two or three of which are emphasized by alliteration (similarity of syllable onset). But modern writers argue that the poets who composed these texts preferred certain combinations of stressed and unstressed syllables to others (see, for example, Cable 1974: *passim* and the table given in Stockwell & Minkova 1997: 69). More recent researchers have argued that the permissible combinations are those found in the words of the language, and that they should be regarded as feet, or *word-feet* (see Russom 1987 and 1998). The metrically significant stresses in old Germanic lines (those included in the poet's count) are referred to as *beats* by traditional English metrists (see Attridge 1982: 160), and Old Germanic poets sometimes employed a grammatical monosyllable instead of a stress to represent a beat (see Russom 1987: 13 and Getty 2002: 12). This phenomenon is sometimes called (ictus) *erosion*, and it ensures that the patterns of accentual metres are not simply the alternation of stress and non-stress, which modern works on metrics use the concepts of verse design and instance to explain. The language in verse instances often contrasts with, rather than conforms to, the template of their verse design, and this non-conformity has been traditionally termed *tension* (see Allen 1973: 110-13).¹⁴ Erosion is tension produced by placing an unstressed syllable in an *ictic*, or *strong* position; the converse, placing a stressed monosyllable in a weak position between two other stresses, is termed *incursion* and is equally common. Another form of tension occurs when a strong syllable is placed in a weak position and results in the neighbouring weak syllable

¹³ Note that linguistics regards moras as well as syllables as forming feet; thus the new discipline of metrical phonology describes both Spanish and English as languages of *moraic trochees*, which is to say that sequences of two light syllables are patterned s w and that heavy syllables contain an inherent s w contrast (see Hayes 1995: 59-61).

¹⁴ Auguste Dorchain argued that tension satisfies the human need for stimulation and variety (1919: 22-23), and Nigel Fabb argues that a series of minimal departures from it can serve to establish and communicate the norm (2001: 786). Modern Linguistic metrists describe lines with tension as more *complex* than those that lack it (see, for example, Fabb 2002: 215-17).

falling in a strong one. This is termed *inversion* and is usually only found at the beginning of lines and hemistichs.¹⁵ Finally, two syllables may be placed in a weak position where one is expected or vice-versa, and this is termed *resolution*. As a result of tension, accentual patterns in verse do not consist of stressed and unstressed syllables in a fixed order: to achieve an adequate match with the pattern of the template the poet has only to avoid placing strong syllables in weak positions (see Hanson 1995: 66 and Hanson & Kiparsky 1996: 297).

Accentual patterns, which are a feature of verse in the Germanic and Slavonic languages, do not occur in that of French, but there are phonological reasons why Ibero-Romance verse should resemble Germanic and not French in this respect.¹⁶ The first is that word stress, which has probably always been weak in French relative to phrasal stress, has disappeared from the modern language (see Ewert 1946: 101-06).¹⁷ French poets have therefore patterned what their language has (phrasal stress), rather than what it lacks (word stress). But all the Ibero-Romance varieties have strong word stress (see Penny 2002: 42), and it would be surprising if Iberian poets ignored it completely. The second phonological difference between French and the Ibero-Romance languages is the extent to which speakers allot what is perceived as equal time to all syllables in delivery. This tendency is termed *syllable-timing* (Crystal 1985: 298-99) and Benoît de Cornulier argues that it is crucial to the creation of rhythm in French verse (1995: 120). Germanic languages such as English, on the other hand, exhibit a different tendency, termed *stress-timing*, in which stressed syllables occur at intervals that are perceived as equal (see Giegerich 1980 and Roach 1982). Both these types of delivery, however, can be found in varieties of Ibero-Romance:

¹⁵ The *closure principle* states that rules tend to be lax at the beginnings of units and stricter at their close (Smith 1968), and Hanson & Kiparsky argue that this applies particularly to metrical rules (1996: 293).

¹⁶ Works like Volkoff 1978 and Pensom 2000, which argue that French verse contains, or has contained, contrasts between different types of syllable, demonstrate that these contrasts do not form a pattern, but constitute an important source of variety.

¹⁷ In modern French strong syllables and lexical monosyllables receive more stress than their neighbours only when they are phrase-final; for a discussion of how this is used to pattern verse see Cornulier 1995: 111-15.

modern Spanish is usually regarded as a syllable-timed language (see Olsen 1972), but laboratory experiments have shown that speakers of the River-Plate dialect stress-time their delivery (see Toledo 1988: 83). Modern Peninsular Portuguese is also predominantly stress-timed, a property that Robert Hall has argued was shared by medieval Castilian (1965: 233-34).

Tomás Navarro (Tomás), who measured deliveries of Spanish verse long before Toledo's experiments, found that stressed syllables usually occupy significantly more time than unstressed (1974: *passim*). But he identified units that did take approximately equal time in delivery: he termed them *períodos rítmicos*, and each consisted of a stressed syllable and the unstressed syllables that separated it from the nearest stress. There can thus be little doubt that Ibero-Romance poets have available the raw materials for accentual patterning in their verse. We should, therefore, set aside the reservations of several generations of eminent French metrists, and examine the surviving Ibero-Romance verse texts for evidence of the counting or patterning of stress, particularly in the period before French and Occitan culture became an overwhelming factor influencing poetic taste.¹⁸ Unfortunately, however, that period began at the end of the twelfth century, just when texts in phonetic Ibero-Romance first appeared (see Deyermond 1971: 35 and Wright 2002: 248). We thus have only indirect evidence of how earlier Peninsular poets versified, and it falls into two categories: fragments of folk-verse embedded in the earliest literary texts and traditional verse that was set down in writing much later, but suggests by its subject matter an earlier date of oral composition. I shall devote the remainder

¹⁸ A number of eminent French metrists have argued that such patterns have no role, or only a limited one, in the Romance languages, including Ibero-Romance (see, for example, Morel-Fatio 1987, Foulché-Delbosc 1902, and Le Gentil 1952). These writers failed to find stress patterns in Ibero-Romance poetry partly because they were not accustomed to hearing them, and partly because their definition of an accentual pattern was far too rigid. They were looking for a fixed pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables; but this is not necessary for a sufficient match with the template. In duple-time stress-syllabic metres the absence of strong syllables in weak positions suffices; and the presence of stress in all strong positions suffices in triple-time metres, which allow strong syllables in weak positions, and in mixed metres, where an irregular number of syllables appear in weak positions (see Duffell in press).

of this article to an examination of such indirect evidence in Andalusian *kharjas*, Galician *cantigas de amigo*, and Castilian *refranes*, *romances*, and *muñeiras*.

5. *Kharjas*

The metrical system of Classical Arabic, or *'arud*, emerged in the sixth century CE and was codified in the eighth. Arabic verse is both quantitative and syllabic: poets counted moras, and patterned heavy and light syllables, in 23 different metres (see Gibb et al. 1960: 667-77 and Preminger et al. 1975: 42-44). The oldest and most prestigious Arabic verse form, the *qasīda*, comprises up to 100 lines linked by a single rhyme, and strophic verse first appeared in Arabic only in medieval Spain in verse forms known as *muwaššahas* and *zajals*.¹⁹ A typical rhyme scheme was (aa) bbbaa cccaa dddaa eeeaa fffaa and the refrain (rhymed a in this scheme), known as a *kharja*, consisted in most cases of lines from the lyrics of popular songs. It was, appropriately, in colloquial language, usually Arabic, but in the case of sixty-one surviving *muwaššahas*, in Romance or a mixture of Romance and Arabic.²⁰ The Romance *kharjas* were committed to writing in the eleventh and twelfth centuries and thus predate the earliest attempts to represent Ibero-Romance in a phonetic script employing the Roman alphabet. Because the Romance *kharjas* are in Semitic scripts, which have consonants but not vowels, they were not identified as such until 1948, and their first editors wrongly reconstructed around 20 per cent of the Romance words (see Corriente 1997: 329). Although Richard Hitchcock has pointed out the hazards of inferring too

¹⁹ Many metrical systems employ line-end repetition between the structural elements of two or more syllables: repetition of a nucleus is termed assonance, of a coda consonance, and of both is termed rhyme (Arabic *qāfiya*). The repetition of the entire syllable, termed *radīf* in Arabic and rime riche in French, occurs more often in Persian than in Arabic verse (see Houtsma 1936: 1138). The repetition of a syllable onset is termed alliteration and is usually employed in verse on a less systematic basis; it also usually occurs within the line rather than between lines.

²⁰ Of these sixty-one *muwaššahas*, forty-two are in Classical Arabic and nineteen in Hebrew; they are now usually numbered A1-A42 and H1-H19. Corriente shows that approximately 60 per cent of the words in the *kharjas* of these *muwaššahas* are Romance and about 30 per cent Arabic, while less than 10 per cent are Hebrew (1997: 332).

much from the *kharjas* set within the Arabic *muwaššas* (1973), those set within Hebrew poems are much more reliably in early Ibero-Romance (see Jones 1981: 38 and Deyermond 1992: 61-63). Certainly, a number of writers have used both groups of *kharjas* to support hypotheses in areas as diverse as the medieval Andalusian dialect and the history of Ibero-Romance metrics (see Corriente 1997: 336-72).

The metrics of the Romance *kharjas* is highly controversial: it has been argued that the poets were employing the Classical Arabic quantitative metres (see Corriente 1997: 92), metres that counted both syllables and stresses (García Gómez 1956), and metres that counted only syllables (Monroe 1994: 78). The surviving texts show considerable departures from both the Classical Arabic metres and from regularities of stress, and the best metrical explanation is probably the ‘bridging theory’ of Federico Corriente (1997: 101 & 107). He argues that the Romance lines are best interpreted as being in the Classical Arabic metres adjusted for Romance stress, that is, treating a stressed vowel as a long vowel in Arabic (1997: 108-19). This would clearly account for the fact that the poet seems to be counting syllables and placing stressed syllables in many of the places where a long syllable is expected. The following lines illustrate the regularity in syllable count and accent found in the Romance *kharja*. The transcription is that of Deyermond (1971: 4, 5, & 9), the syllable count and stressing of which are confirmed by the more recent edition of Corriente (1997: 283 & 319).²¹ In order to measure the extent to which the poets counted

²¹ In my examples I have adopted the following aids to scansion: (1) words are double-spaced, (2) syllables have been separated by hyphens, (3) primary stress (on the strong syllables of polysyllabic words) is indicated by bold typeface, and (4) secondary-stressed syllables and monosyllables are underlined if they are metrically significant (that is, they occupy strong positions in a patterning metre). In my examples the French shorthand for syllable count is given in brackets: an arabic numeral indicates the number of syllables to the last stress in the line, and it is followed by M (*masculin* or *agudo*), F (*fēminin* or *grave*), or E (*esdrújulo* – not found in French). The number of beats is also indicated by an arabic numeral plus B (the shorthand for beats as employed by Attridge 1982). Beats, which are normally provided by the strong syllables of polysyllabic words and by lexical monosyllables, may exceptionally be provided by grammatical monosyllables and secondary stresses (see Section 4 above).

or patterned syllables and accents, I have scanned the poems in two different ways: first counting syllables in the Romance manner, and then counting beats in the Germanic; analysing a combination of the two should then reveal whether any patterns of stress and non-stress are present.

A12 (1) Vé-nid la **Pas**-ca, ay, aun sin e-lle [9F 4B]
 (2) laz-**ran**-do [?] meu co-ra-**zón** por e-lle [9F 4B]

H18 (3) **Tant'** a-**ma**-re, **tant'** a-**ma**-re [7F 4B]
 (4) ha-**bíb**, **tant'** a-**ma**-re [5F 4B]
 (5) en-fer-**mi**-ron **we**-lyos **ni**-dios [7F 4B]
 (6) e **do**-len tan **ma**-le [5F 4B]

These *kharijas* are syllabically regular, but they also contain a pattern based on stress, which occurs in positions 4, 7, and 9 of the first two lines, in positions 3, 5, and 7 of (3) and (5), and in positions 2 and 5 of (4) and (6). The metre of H18 also has clear affinities with Medieval Latin metres that regulated stresses as well as syllable count (see Norberg 1958: 119-31), and Dorothy Clarke argued that some of the surviving *kharijas* in colloquial Arabic also shared this property (1978: 43-49).²² Note also that (4) and (6) are linked not by rhyme but by assonance, which was a feature of early Romance verse that had never been cultivated in Classical Arabic (see Clarke 1949: 99-100 and Navarro 1974: 41). The accentual regularity of these lines can be accounted for by assuming that their metre is a development of *'arud* in which stressed vowels are equated with long. If this is the case, then it would follow automatically that poets would both count syllables and pattern stress (as Arabic poets had patterned vowel length). Uncertain though their texts are, therefore, the Romance *kharijas* offer credible evidence that the earliest Ibero-Romance versifiers counted both syllables and stresses.

²²As noted above, tension in the accentual metres of Medieval Latin and the Germanic languages takes several forms: one of the most common is *initial inversion*, where a weak/strong contrast is reversed at the beginning of a line or hemistich; in the lines quoted 'lazrando', 'habib', and 'e dolen' could all be classed as initial inversions (iambic hemistich openings) in a basically trochaic metre.

6. *Cantigas de amigo*

By the end of the twelfth century, when the earliest surviving texts in phonetic Ibero-Romance appeared, literary influence from beyond the Pyrenees was already strong in the Northern parts of the Iberian Peninsula. It came via three routes, the first of which was from the North-East: Catalonia had long enjoyed a close political and cultural relationship with what is now Southern France: thus, in the thirteenth century Catalanian troubadours composed poems in the same language and metres as their Occitan-speaking neighbours (see Cabré 1998), and even in the fourteenth they employed a mixture of Catalan and Occitan in their verse (see Pagès 1934). The second route was via the Cistercian monasteries of Christian Spain, where the monks followed the same disciplines, composed the same types of Latin verse, and read the same *chansons de geste* as their French brothers (see Rico 1984-85). The third route by which French and Occitan culture reached Iberia was the Pilgrim Way to Santiago de Compostela. The *trouvères* and troubadours who entertained the better-off pilgrims on their journeys to and from the shrine of Saint James also captivated their hosts, and the Iberian Christian courts soon produced their own *trovadores* (see Hart 1999). The variety of Ibero-Romance in which they composed was that of Galicia, a region with a long tradition of folk-verse and popular lyric. The highly polished court lyrics that the *trovadores* produced owed much to Occitan and French models, but included a distinctive traditional element that was at its strongest in the *cantigas de amigo*, songs in a woman's voice that had no parallel in Provence, but is not unlike that found in the *kharjas*.²³

The *cantigas de amigo* that have survived are cultured poems, composed by men, but some of them have a parallelistic structure, and probably represent the reworking of traditional lyrics sung by women (see Deyermond 2001: 44-49). Although the *trovadores* generally counted syllables, employed more elaborate strophes, and preferred rhyme to assonance, these particular poems have features that form no part of the French

²³ The case that this traditional element is present, at least in the parallelistic *cantigas de amigo*, is argued in Deyermond 2001: 49-52.

or Occitan traditions and must derive from a native one (see Parkinson, 2006). The parallelistic *cantigas de amigo* are therefore our best guide to the type of counting and patterning that traditional Galician versifiers employed. The analysis that follows is based on the text of thirty of the best-known poems in Nunes's 1926-28 edition; the thirty poems, numbered 24-53 in Margit Frenk's *Lírica española de tipo popular* (1966), contain 253 different lines, excluding the refrains.²⁴ I have regarded the mode (most frequently occurring) number of syllables and beats in the lines of each poem as the norm and classified any line having a different number as irregular. On this basis there are nine different line lengths that occur as norms and four different beat-counts: they are distributed as in Figure 3.

FIGURE 3

Cantigas de amigo: 253-lines, 30 poems
A. Regularities

<i>syllable count</i>	<i>% of lines</i>	<i>syllables count</i>	<i>% of lines</i>	<i>beat count</i>	<i>% of lines</i>
4	0.8	9	10.3	2	12.3
5	9.5	10	15.0	3	42.3
6	27.3	11	11.5	4	35.6
7	15.4	12	7.9	5	9.9
8	2.4				

²⁴ Nunes's numbers for the thirty poems are: 19-21, 66, 75, 79, 156, 200, 220, 225, 252, 258, 262, 358, 382, 386, 388, 413, 415-16, 419, 428, 486, 491, 494-97, 506, 512. I have excluded from my statistics all fully repeated lines, including refrains; their inclusion would obviously boost the proportion of regularities of every type, but would provide no evidence for one type of regularity versus another. The (N) numbers on the left are those of Nunes 1926-28, and the poem and line numbers in Frenk 1966 are given in parentheses.

B. Irregularities

1. lines with irregular syllable count = 9.9%
2. lines with irregular beat count = 3.5%
3. poems with perfect regularity of syllable count = 60%
4. poems with perfect regularity of beat count = 83.3%
5. no poem contains a line that is irregular in both syllable count and beat count

It is clear from this table that the lines of these poems are more regular in their number of accents than in their number of syllables: 96.5 per cent of lines, and 83 per cent of poems have a regular beat count, while only 90.1 per cent of lines and 60 per cent of poems have a regular syllable count. Moreover, these regularities seem to be complementary: one may vary from the norm providing the other does not. Longer lines are particularly likely to vary in syllable count from those in the corresponding position of other strophes, as the following lines show:

- N252 (7) es-**tan**-do na er-**mi**-da **ant**' o al-**tar** [11M, 4B] (43, 5)
 (8) cer-**ca**-ron-mi as **on**-das **gran**-des do **mar** [12M, 4B] (43, 6)
- N19 (9) se sa-**be**-des **no**-vas do meu a-**ma**-do [10F, 4B] (46, 10)
 (10) -Vós me pre-gun-**ta**-des po-lo **voss**' a-**mi**-go [11F, 4B] (46, 13)
- N75 (11) Le-**vad**', a-**mi**-go, que dor-**mi**-de-las ma-nhã-as **fri**-as
 [14F, 5B] (50, 1)
 (12) **to**-da-las a-**ves** do **mun**-do d'a-**mor** di-**zi**-an [12F, 5B] (50, 2)
 (13) do meu a-**mor** e do **voss**' en **ment**' a-**vi**-an [11F, 5B] (50, 8)

Note that these poems are slightly more regular if hiatus is assumed between adjacent vowels, rather than the French and Occitan norm of synaloepha; but, when the *trovadores* wanted to delete a final vowel, they usually employed *apocope*, as in 'ant' (7) or 'voss' (13).

Many poems are regular in their number of both syllables and beats: sometimes this produces an accentual pattern at the end of the line, and sometimes a consistent rhythm throughout the line:

- N491 (14) **On**-das do mar de **Vi**-go [6F 3B] (44, 1)
 (15) se **vis**-tes meu a-**mi**-go [6F 3B] (44, 2)
 N495 (16) **Quan**-tas sa-**be**-des a-**mar** a-**mi**-go [9F 4B] (52,1)
 (17) **trei**-des co-**mig**' a lo mar de **Vi**-go [9F 4B] (52, 2)

Instances (14) and (15) close in two trochees (s w), while (16) and (17) contain two dactyls (s w w) followed by two trochees. But the poet's counting and patterning of accents is probably clearest where syllable count varies in these poems, as in the following lines:

- N506 (18) va-**ia**-mos, ir-**mã**-a, va-**ia**-mos dor-**mir** [11M 4B] (51, 1)
 (19) seu **ar**-co na **mã**-ao as **a**-ves fe-**rir** [11M 4B] (51, 8)
 (20) E-nas **ri**-bas do **la**-go, u eu vi an-**dar** [12M 4B] (51,10)
 (21) seu **ar**-co na **mã**-ao a las **a**-ves ti-**rar** [12M 4B] (51,11)

Instances (18) and (19) comprise three amphibrachs (w s w) and an iamb (w s), while the other two lines have a hemistich-initial extra syllable, that is before the first stress in (20) and before the third in (21). Such initial extra syllables are termed *anacrusic* in English triple-time metres, in which they are the rule rather than the exception. The term is borrowed from music, where zero, one, or two notes may precede the first beat in a line without affecting its basic rhythm (see ABRSM 1958: 18). Similarly, in verse based on the counting of beats a line or hemistich may have one, two, or no syllables in anacrusis: this initial variability is a feature of some medieval Hispanic verse, and Spanish metrists usually refer to it as *pie perdido* (see Clarke 1964: 40, Navarro 1974: 35, and Domínguez Caparrós 2001: 38).

From the foregoing analysis it is clear that the authors of the *cantigas de amigo* counted both syllables and accents, and in some cases they formed these into contrasting weak/strong patterns. The *trovadores* may, of course, have regularized the syllable count of traditional lines to follow imported fashions, but the counting and patterning of accents, not present in their foreign models, must surely have been a feature of the Galician folk originals.

7. Refranes

Even if the earliest English verse had not been committed to writing its metrics could have been inferred from the structure of traditional folk verse circulating orally today. Modern English folk-songs, proverbs, and nursery rhymes still bear the traces of a metrics in which poets counted beats, not syllables, and emphasized those beats by alliteration. It is therefore reasonable to seek evidence of a primeval Ibero-Romance metrics in similar folk texts, even though they were first recorded in writing relatively recently. Perhaps the oldest texts of all are proverbs, ancient attempts at passing on wisdom to new generations. Some proverbs are as short as a single line of verse, and therefore offer no clues to what their composers would have counted in a series of lines: English examples are ‘There’s no smoke without fire’ (5M syllables) and ‘One swallow doesn’t make a summer’ (8F). But longer proverbs contain internal repetition: thus ‘**Ma**-ny a **mick**-le makes a **muck**-le’ (4F + 3F) reveals an author who counted stresses (2 + 2) and alliterated them.²⁵ Many of the longer English proverbs are thus verse that resembles the metre of Old English epics, such as *Beowulf* (Wren & Bolton 1988) and *The Battle of Maldon* (Scragg 1992). Spanish proverbs also display a taste for alliteration and some concern for the counting of stresses.

Some of the earliest Spanish proverbs were first committed to writing in the fifteenth century, and their collection and preservation has traditionally been attributed to the Marqués de Santillana (b. 1398, d. 1458). The *Refranes que dicen las viejas tras el fuego* (Bizzarri 1995) are ordered alphabetically, and modern critics have debated whether they are in verse or prose because, although they often rhyme, alliterate, or assonate, and many show the parallelism typical of ancient Semitic verse, many are irregular in syllable count (see Bizzarri: 1995: 18-20). But, as I have shown, counting syllables is only one mode of versifying, and both counting and patterning can be found within the collection. Some *refranes* are syllabically regular (and a few are octosyllabic couplets), but far more exhibit the

²⁵ A more complex example, involving rhyme rather than alliteration, and employing subtle differences in phrasal stress, is the proverb: ‘Red sky at night, shep-herd’s de-light; red sky in the mor-ning, shep-herd’s war-ning’. This micro-poem records a meteorological fact that may be as old as the end of the last Ice Age.

type of regularity we find in the following proverbs (laid out here as hemistichs with my scansion aids):

- | | | | | | |
|--------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|----------------------|-----------|
| (22) A | ca- ua -llo | co-me- dor | ca- bes -tro | cor -to | [7M + 4F] |
| (23) A | di- ne -ros | to- ma -dos | bra -ços | que- bra -dos | [6F + 4F] |
| (24) A | <u>dos</u> | pa- la -bras | <u>tres</u> | pe- dra -das | [4F + 3F] |
| (25) A | <u>buen</u> | bo- ca -do, | buen | gri -to | [4F + 2F] |

Two of these instances rhyme and two assonate ((22) imperfectly), but they all contain an irregular number of syllables and 2 + 2 beats, like many English proverbs. The first hemistich of (23) differs from the second in having two syllables in anacrusis; similarly the first of (24) has a single syllable in anacrusis

We can only speculate on the reasons for the metrical similarity between English and Spanish folk verse. Many scholars believe that the dynamic accent that typifies Romance became a feature of Late Latin following the influx of Germanic (and, in the East, Slavonic) peoples; if Germanic influence could be responsible such an important change in phonology, it could surely account for the habit of counting stresses in Romance folk verse.²⁶ Certainly, some writers have thought so (see, for example, Leonard 1931 and Hall 1965), but, as Juan Carlos Bayo has pointed out, ‘Germanic influence [on Ibero- Romance metrics] is problematic: the absence of Visigothic texts means that we are effectively trying to solve one mystery by recourse to a bigger one’ (Duffell 2002a: 150). The latter problem is further complicated by the fact that the Visigoths spoke Latin when they arrived in Iberia (see Wright 2002: 30). But, even if Germanic influence is not involved, the anonymous composers of the Castilian *refranes* seem to have counted stresses rather than syllables; in isolation this may be a minor point, but it reinforces the other evidence I have presented.

²⁶ Writers who argue that dynamic accent became a feature of Latin only in the second century ad include Marouzeau (1931: 20), Meunier (1933: 71-77), Nougaret (1948: 4), and Beare (1957: 56); those who argue otherwise include Lewis (1898: 6), Wilkinson (1970: 120-21), and Allen (1973: 154); for other parties to this dispute see Duffell 1991: 332.

8. Romances

Texts of other types of traditional verse have survived in Castilian that are far more important than the *refranes* from both a historical and a literary point of view. They include lyrics (*villancicos*) and ballads (*romances*) most of which were first committed to writing in the sixteenth century, but were probably in circulation orally for many centuries previously. The same type of line seems to have been employed in both genres, but in this section I shall concentrate on the versification of the *romances*. Ballads that refer to events of the eleventh century may, of course, have been composed much later, but they are more likely to have been first turned into folk entertainment when those events were still fresh in people's minds. A far bigger problem for metrists is that oral texts of this type vary from one performance to another, and some ballads have survived in widely differing versions. In the course of reworking by generations of performers these ballads may also have been reshaped to fit new fashions in versifying. In the form in which they were first committed to writing, the *romances* are syllabically regular, and modern editions naturally preserve, or enhance this regularity. The *octosilabos* of the ballads are linked by rhyme between the even-numbered lines in each quatrain, and the only fixed position for stress is the seventh of each line. Stress in the earlier part of the line, however, would have been wrenched to fit a musical accompaniment, and the lines would have been sung with a regular musical beat (see Wright 1987: x-xi).

In some versions of some ballads, very little wrenching would have been required; for example, the ballad *El prisionero* begins (Wright 1987: 7, with that editor's numbering):²⁷

W5 (26)	<u>por</u> el <u>mes</u> <u>e-ra</u> de <u>ma</u> -yo	[7F 4?B]
(27)	<u>quan</u> -do <u>ha</u> -ze <u>la</u> cal- <u>or</u>	[7M 4?B]
(28)	<u>quan</u> -do <u>can</u> -ta <u>la</u> ca- <u>lan</u> -dria	[7F 4?B]
(29)	<u>y</u> res- <u>pon</u> -d ^e el <u>ruy</u> -se- <u>ñor</u>	[7M 4?B]0

I have underlined the odd-numbered syllables in Wright's

²⁷ I have indicated synaloepha in Instance (29) and throughout this study by placing the first of the two adjacent vowels in superscript.

text that do not contain primary stress in order to demonstrate its relationship with a hypothetical regular trochaic rhythm (indicated by '4?B' in brackets). Although the first line is not trochaic and would require wrenching in any regular delivery, the other lines are regular provided three monosyllables ('la' and 'y') and a secondary stress ('ruy-') count as beats. But in one of the versions of this ballad the first line is also perfectly trochaic: it opens 'Mes de mayo, mes de mayo'. This version may be closer to an oral original, where the accentual regularity would be more obvious to the performer than the syllabic, while that in Wright's edition reflects the modern taste for rhythmic variety in this metre (see Navarro 1973: 37-66).

The openings (and, in some cases, the closes) of other ballads are also much more trochaic than their middle sections; for example, the following ballad:

- W8 (30) **Fon-te fri-da fon-te fri-da,** [7F 4?B]
 (31) **fon-te fri-d^a y con a-mor,** [7M 4?B]
 (32) **do to-das las a-ve-zi-cas** [7F 3?B]
 (33) **van to-mar con-so-la-ción;** [7M 4?B]
 * * * * *
 (34) **Ma-lo, fal-so, mal tray-dor,** [7M 4?B]
 (35) **que no quie-ro ser t^u a-mi-ga,** [7F 4?B]
 (36) **ni ca-sar con-ti-go, no!** [7MF 4?B]

Of these lines only (32) lacks a fourth beat and a trochaic rhythm, because its second syllable has primary stress. Note that this ballad's lines are linked by assonance rather than rhyme, which suggests that it is of greater than average antiquity, but that both (31) and (35) require the synaloepha normal in the sixteenth century, rather than the earlier hiatus, to regularize their syllable count.

There are clearly grounds for suspicion that the surviving texts of the *romances* have been polished in the interval between their (oral) composition and their appearance in writing. Dorothy C. Clarke (1949) produced a metrical analysis of forty-six of the earliest ballads, which had been dated as far back as the fifteenth century by S. Griswold Morley (1945). As always, many of the

lines contained adjacent syllables in adjacent words, and on 112 occasions hiatus was required to produce a line of 7M/F syllables. Whoever was responsible for the written text was not applying synaloepha rigorously in the sixteenth-century manner (although Clarke employs it to produce the correct syllable count on 628 occasions). More importantly, a number of lines in these poems are syllabically irregular, irrespective of adjacent-vowel treatment: 52 are too long and 6 too short (Clarke 1949: 105-12). But, if hiatus and synaloepha were both permissible, we cannot be sure that several hundred other lines were not also irregular in oral performance. This raises the question of how octosyllabic the earliest *verso común*, the ubiquitous short line that became the *octosílabo*, really was.

9. The *Verso común*

In a later work Clarke argued the *octosílabo* became a strictly counted syllabic metre only in the fifteenth century (1964: 17-51). She cited a long list of earlier medieval poems that contain many lines of other than 7M/F, and she showed that some poets continued to include irregular lines in their *octosílabos* as late as the end of the fourteenth century. Of her many examples from the *Cancionero de Baena*, some have been regularized by modern editors, but others have not, including the following (Dutton & González Cuenca 1993):²⁸

CB251	(37)	<u>Grand</u> cuy-ta de <u>mí</u> par-te	[6F 4?B] (3)
CB301	(38)	Pues <u>yo</u> <u>muy</u> <u>bien</u> lo <u>sé</u>	[6M 4?B] (31)
CB306	(39)	cap-ti-vo de <u>mi</u> -ña tris-tu-ra	[8F 3B] (1)
	(40)	en <u>cár</u> -cel de-se-ja mo-rer	[8M 3B] (27)

The poet may well have been counting or patterning beats in these lines: (37) and (38) have four lexical monosyllables providing a possible four beats, and (39) and (40) each comprise

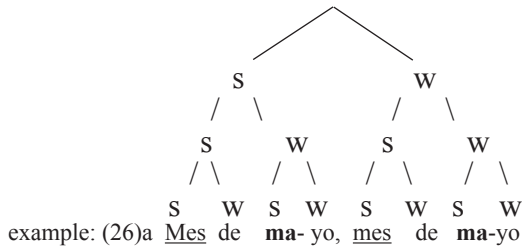
²⁸ In Dutton's *Cancionero del siglo xv* (1990-91) these poems are given the numbers ID 1387, 1432, and 0131; they are attributed to Pero González de Mendoza, Pero Ferrus, and Macías respectively.

two amphibrachs (w s w) and an iamb (w s). The case can certainly be argued that rhythmic structure of these examples of the *verso común* was as important to the poet as syllable count.

Clarke believed that the poets had intended their lines to be *octosílabos*, and discussed the possible explanations for the syllabic irregularities found in the surviving texts. Earlier she had suggested that they might be the result of bad workmanship (*cacometría*; see Clarke 1949: 104), but, unlike most editors, she did not attribute the irregularity to scribal error (perhaps because she recognized that many lines defy editorial correction). In her later work she hypothesized a system of interlinear compensation (a line minus one syllable could be balanced by an adjacent line that contained an extra syllable). She admitted, however, that this can explain only a proportion of cases (1964: 26-27); similarly, anti-rhythmic counting (sometimes called the *ley de Mussafia*) can explain only variations in the length of *agudo* lines, and was, she argued, a Galician rather than Castilian feature (1964: 38).²⁹ Clarke reluctantly concluded that most of the variations found in the count of medieval Castilian *octosílabos* must result from the anacrusic principle, or *pie perdido* (1964: 40; see also 1949: 104). But this principle is a feature of verse that counts beats, not syllables: indeed, accentual verse could be described as the anacrusic principle extended to the whole line. This line of thought leads back to the highly trochaic opening and closing lines of the ballads quoted in Section 8, above. It also pre-empts the linguistic theories of Spanish line structure first put forward by Carlos Piera (1980). He hypothesized the strong/weak hierarchical structure for the *octosílabo* shown in Figure 4:

²⁹This ‘law’ is named after the scholar who first noted that, when counting syllables, some Ibero-Romance poets employed a different principle from the Romance norm. They counted actual syllables, so that lines of 7M were the equivalent of those of 6F, which makes the phrasal stresses at the line end occur at irregular intervals in a syllable-timed delivery; hence the term *anti-rhythmic* counting.

FIGURE 4
Structure of the *octosilabo*



In terms of this hierarchical diagram, the anacrusic principle is a dispensation allowing the weakest position in the line (the first) to contain zero or two syllables rather than one. This is a feature of many accentual metres (see Duffell 2004b: 71-73), and strongly supports the hypothesis that the medieval *verso común* involved other types of counting and patterning besides the purely syllabic.

10. *Muñeiras*

There is one other type of traditional Ibero-Romance verse, the *muñeira* ('mill-song'), which exhibits considerable syllabic irregularity. Again, these folk-songs were committed to writing only in the sixteenth century, but were probably in oral circulation for many centuries earlier. Manuel Milá y Fontanals published examples in Galician and Castilian, and the following lines typify their metre (1893: 386-88):

- | | | | | |
|------|------|-------------------------------------|---|------------------|
| M115 | (41) | Can -do te ve -xo | d'o mon -te n'al- tu -ra | [4F + 5F 4B] (3) |
| | (42) | A to -d'o mon cor -po | lle <u>da</u> ca-len- tu -ra | [5F + 5F 4B] (4) |
| M125 | (43) | Al pa- sar la bar -ca | me di- jo el bar- que -ro | [5F + 6F 4B] (1) |
| | (44) | Mo -za bo- ni -ta | no pa -ga di- ne -ro | [4F + 5F 4B] (2) |

These lines are irregular in syllable count, and their authors must have been counting stresses or beats; in the majority of lines stress is also patterned, occurring on every third syllable.

Note that the anacrusic principle applies to both hemistichs: in (43) both have two syllables before the first beat, while in (41) and (44) the first hemistich has zero anacrusis. This is further evidence of a primitive Ibero-Romance metrics that was based on more than the counting of syllables.

II. Conclusions

The disciplines of literary criticism, linguistics, and metrics became established in Spain only in the fifteenth-century works of the Marqués de Santillana, Antonio de Nebrija (b. 1444, d. 1522), and Juan del Encina (b. 1468, d. 1529).³⁰ All three noted that, lamentably, even in their own day some poets did not count syllables (see Clarke 1949: 104 and Gómez Moreno 1990: 56-57). Their judgments announced and, to some extent, promoted the change in taste that downgraded syllabically irregular verse in Spanish from *cacometría* to *ametria*. Indeed, many modern readers of Spanish verse would agree with Patrick Harvey when he says ‘I find it difficult to apply any of the theories which postulate a verse in which one does not count syllables’ (1963: 138). But this article has presented ample evidence that such verse has not only survived, but offers evidence of the counting and patterning of stresses or beats by the earliest Ibero-Romance poets. After the twelfth century this *métrica autóctona* was challenged by *métrica extranjera*, modes of versifying that originated in France, and the subsequent centuries witnessed a struggle between a native tradition of counting stresses and an imported convention that made syllable count paramount. This competition between accent and syllable was resolved only in the sixteenth century by the import of a metrics from Italy that gave due weight to both.

³⁰ The story of this development is told in detail by Weiss 1990 and Gómez Redondo 2000; the products of earlier Occitan-derived metrical theory in the Iberian Peninsula can be found in Casas Homs 1956 and 1962.

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