PROSODIC RESONANCE

F JUNIPER
Louisa, Virginia

We may regard a syllable as consisting of an initial consonant cluster (which may be zero), a vowel cluster, and a final consonant cluster (which may be zero in most schemes of phonemic analysis).

This analysis is ambiguous; it varies from dialect to dialect, and within one dialect according to one's point of view. To a Scotsman, for instance, bird would certainly be b + a + rd; but southern Englishmen omit the r, Americans who pronounce it as a glide may want to count it as part of the vowel, and Americans like me who omit the a may count the r as the vowel or may call the vowel zero. So also, in all dialects, we may take the y in boy as the completion of a diphthong or as a final consonant. These ambiguities infect all of prosody, including what I write here; but not to an intolerable degree.

At this level of analysis two syllables may be either similar or different in each of their three parts, so that there are $2^3 = 8$ possible kinds of resemblance. Two of these are degenerate: homonymy (e.g., beat & beet) and complete dissonance (break & mend). Of the remaining six, there seem to be traditional names for four:

- **Rhyme**: similarity in vowel & final consonants (love & shove)
- **Alliteration**: similarity in initial consonants (love & light)
- **Assonance**: similarity in vowel (love & duck)
- **Consonance**: similarity in initial & final consonants (love & live)

If the other two have not been named already, I suggest:

- **Deliteration**: for a correspondence of the final consonant cluster only (hit & bat)
- **Insoneance**: for one of the initial consonant cluster & the vowel (bat & ban)

Alternatively, we may set up a concise systematic nomenclature by calling homonymy blend, dissonance clash, and the six resonances by mixtures of parts of these two, chosen to bear the given relation to blend:

- **1-resonances**:
  - blush = alliteration
  - clesh = assonance
  - cland = deliteration

- **2-resonances**:
  - clend = rhyme
  - bland = consonance
  - blesh = insonance

In this table the second, in each clashing pair.

It is not hard to read a science

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In this table the first column contains resemblances in one constituent; the second, in two. The resonances on each line form a complementary pair.

It is not hard to write quatrains in which the members of these pairs are interleaved, with pleasing effect. Over twenty years ago I read a science-fiction story containing a poem in which the first four lines ended in prostitute, lines, light & tunes. These contain two clashes (column pairs) and two blashes (row pairs) as diagrammed at the right.

A similar interleaving of blands & clends is used more seriously & beautifully throughout W. H. Auden's "That Night When Love Began" (though he is forced to an approximation in the third stanza). The end words in the first stanza form the pattern at the right.

The third possibility - clend & blash interleaved - I have never seen. That is a surprise, as rhyme & alliteration are the commonest resonances in conventional verse.

The most complete possible interleaving is an octet of syllables, each clashing with one of the others & bearing a different resonance with each of the remaining six. The names we have been using form an artificial octet of this kind. They may be conveniently diagrammed at the vertices of a cube, which we may squash onto the page in quasi-perspective. The small inner square is the bottom of the cube; the large blend-clash represents 1-resonances, the diagonals of the faces represent 2-resonances, and syllables connected by a body diagonal clash.

Such an artificial octet may be made from any clashing pair of monosyllables such as blend & clash. In that one, only one of the new syllables (bland) happened to be a common English word; but that is unusual. Ordinarily, several new words result, as given in the example at the right. It is amusing & usually possible to pick a clashing pair that are also antonyms, as here, and find a path from one to the other along edges thru real words - i.e., to connect them by a chain of 1-resonances in English: love, late, hate. One might write quatrains on such chains. From the observation that they usually exist, it seems to follow that a large proportion of all monosyllabic combinations of al-
allowed English phoneme clusters are actually used as English words. Complete octets of words are probably not very rare. I have found three:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>lute</th>
<th>light</th>
<th>wit</th>
<th>wait</th>
<th>feet</th>
<th>fat</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-tute</td>
<td>tight</td>
<td>hit</td>
<td>hate</td>
<td>eat</td>
<td>at</td>
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<tr>
<td>tunes</td>
<td>lines</td>
<td>hill</td>
<td>hall</td>
<td>east</td>
<td>-ased</td>
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<tr>
<td>loons</td>
<td>tines</td>
<td>will</td>
<td>wall</td>
<td>feast</td>
<td>fast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The first is based on the quatrain from the story, and works only if your dialect has no glide in tu. On the third I have managed a poem, which I think has some charm, at least for hikers. The meter is an imitation of old native meter (which survives to some extent in nursery rhymes), and I have put in additional alliterations (bleshes) to accord with that tradition.

Convected, fueled by the noon’s fat,
(you are a flame in all you eat),
in sight of our ruddy and pale tent at
the top we made a movable feast.

Now we stand, staring at the east
like the moon, and break our starry fast—
golden-breasted, silvery-assed,
unbound boots on reminiscent feet.

A LITERARY PUZZLE

Michael J. Murphy of Oceanside, New York is researching information for a book on the works of Irish novelist J. S. LeFanu. In one of LeFanu’s novels, it is known that he made use of an anagram in the form of a name: CARMILLA KARNS-STEIN. He is unable to decipher this anagram, and appeals to Word Ways readers for help. According to the story, at one point in time it was traditional for babies to be given a name which was an anagram of their relatives names; therefore, one can speculate that Carmilla Karnstein is an anagram of two (or more?) given names, most likely female, or possibly an anagram of a given name and a surname.