

Introduction to Spanish Versification

METRE (Métrica): The Spanish language has a natural poetic rhythm in that it places a marked stress on one syllable in each word, with a secondary stress on every other syllable. The poetic line ends one syllable (or beat) after the last accented syllable. Thus, each of the following lines has five syllables:

Ya lo comprendo. This is **verso llano**, for one syllable follows the last accented syllable in the line.

Onda de luz. This is **verso agudo**, for one syllable must be added after the last accented syllable.

Cantan los pájaros. This is **verso esdrújulo**, for the two syllables following the last accented syllable count as one. However, if a word such as *pájaros* occurs in the middle of a line, it counts as three syllables.

The following examples may help you to understand this phenomenon:

(verso llano) Ju-ven-tud-di-vi-no-te-so-ro = 9

(verso agudo) ya-te-vas-pa-ra-no-vol-ver (8 + 1) = 9

(verso llano) Mi-rad-có-mo-los-ga-jos-de-las-mag-no-lias = 12

(verso esdrújulo) a-gi-tan-dul-ce-men-te-las-bri-sas-cá-li-das (13-1) = 12

LINKING (Enlace): In counting a line of poetry, vowels adjacent to each other in different words are usually counted as one syllable, even if both are strong vowels (a, e, o). Thus, each of the following lines has seven syllables:

Vino, primero, pura
vestida de inocencia.
Y la amé como un niño.

RHYME (Rima): Spanish has retained two types of rhyme: **consonante** and **asonante**.

Rima consonante, common in English poetry (usually called perfect rhyme), rhymes both vowel and consonant at the end of a line, beginning with the last stressed vowel.

Juventud, divino tesoro,
¡ya te vas para no volver!
Cuando quiero llorar, no lloro...
y a veces lloro sin querer.

Rima asonante is more subtle in that only the vowels rhyme, beginning with the last stressed vowel. Any rhyming of consonants between the affected vowels is accidental. In **verso agudo** only the last vowel in each line rhymes (e.g., podrás rhymes with cantar). In **verso llano** and **verso esdrújulo** two vowels are affected. The following passage provides an example of **rima asonante** only on the even-numbered lines (**versos pares**):

La luna vino a la fragua
con su polisón de nardos;
El niño la mira, mira.
El niño la está mirando.

Updated June 13, 2012