**Poetics Exercise 3: Meter**

**Note on submission**: if this exercise is easier to do with a print copy, do that and turn it in by hand in class.

**Option One (Technical / Critical)**

**Task**: *Scan* 2 lines each from any two poems we have read so far. See if you can choose two different lengths (pentameter, tetrameter, 4-3-4-3 stanzas, etc).

**Instructions**:

1. Retype each pair of lines, double spaced. Then perform your metrical scansion and commentary:
   1. For the iambic lines, use the “WS” notation on page 6 of Professor Glaser’s meter guide.
      1. Indicate elisions and resolutions by placing the W symbol (never S) in between the relevant syllables
      2. Indicate rhythm above the line with / and x marks.
      3. You may use a “\” mark for secondary or relatively lesser stress, but it is not required. Alternatively, if there is a stress you aren’t sure about, or that you feel is “optional,” mark the stress but put it in parenthesis (/)
      4. Write a paragraph describing the different metrical effects you see: how regular are the lines? What are common digressions from the metrical pattern? In short, describe the poet’s metrical style.
2. Optional: add a sentence or two about why you think each poem was written in its meter, perhaps in contrast to the other one.

**Option Two (Creative / Imitative) [this is more challenging… and probably more fun]**

**Task**: Transform prose into iambic meter.

1. Choose a bit of favorite prose from a novel or non-fiction piece. Length should be about 50 syllables, or roughly 30 words.
2. Rewrite the passage into about 5-6 lines of iambic verse, tetrameter or pentameter (pentameter is harder but probably more rewarding). Do this primarily with synonyms, minor syntax changes (invert adjective order, or list items), and of course the flexibility of the meter. Avoid large scale changes to the syntax if you can.
   1. Note two or three metrical irregularities you admitted into your lines. Do this however you like, or follow my example
   2. Scan one line with the WS method (see above for a reminder of how to do this)
3. After you have produced your lines, write a paragraph in which you discuss how you went about writing in meter. Try to describe the different feeling of the material after you had reworked it into verse.
4. Optional: ask an LLM to do the same thing you did, then reprint and say how you think it did.

Example: “I have never before faced Dymphna in tournament play, nor played with the sonic balls the blind require, but I watched him barely dispatch Petropolis Kahn in the round of 16, and I know he is mine” (from *Infinite Jest*)

Never before have I matched up with Dymphna

In tournie play, nor played with sonic balls

(The sort the blind require), but I watched him

Barely dispatch Petropolis the Kahn

In the round of sixteen, and I know he’s mine.

Irregularities: Line initial inversion (“Never” in l.1 and “Barely” in l.4); missing / moved stress (“I” in l.1 then stress on “matched” and again at the end of l.3); feminine ending in l.1; resolution (l.5: In the); only 4 stresses (l.5)

x x / x / x x x / x /

In the round of sixteen, and I know he’s mine.

W S W S W S W S W S