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prosody

[ad. L. *prosōdia* the accent of a syllable, a. Gr. *προσῳδία* a song sung to music, an accompaniment; the tone or accent of a syllable, a mark to show it; later also, a mark of quantity; f. *πρός* to + *ὠδή* song, [ODE](#). Cf. F. *prosodie* (1562 in Hatz.-Darm.).]

1. The science of versification; that part of the study of language which deals with the forms of metrical composition; formerly reckoned as a part of grammar (see note s.v. [GRAMMAR](#) 1), and including also the study of the pronunciation of words (now called *phonology* or *phonetics*), esp. in relation to versification. Also, a treatise on this.

c1450 *Cov. Myst.* xx. (Shaks. Soc.) 189 Amonges alle clerkys we bere the prysse, Of gramer, cadens, and of prosodye. **1580** G. HARVEY *Let. to Spenser* Wks. (Grosart) I. 76, I would gladly be acquainted with M. Drants Prosodye. **a1637** B. JONSON *Eng. Gram.* i. (tr. Scaliger), Prosody, and orthography, are not parts of grammar, but diffused like the blood and spirits through the whole. **1749** *Numbers in Poet. Comp.* 10 There is a very wide Difference between the Latin and English Prosody. And it's in vain to think of introducing the Rules of the former into the latter; since the English Language is not so framed as to admit of it. **1824** L. MURRAY *Eng. Gram.* (ed. 5) I. 345 Prosody consists of two parts: the former teaches the true pronunciation of words, comprising accent, quantity, emphasis, pause, and tone; and the latter, the laws of versification. **1871** R. ELLIS *Catullus* Pref. 17, I have bound myself to avoid certain positions forbidden by the laws of ancient prosody.

β **1586** W. WEBBE *Eng. Poetrie* Pref. (Arb.) 19 If English Poetrie were truely reformed, and some perfect platforme or *Prosodia* of versifying were..sette downe. *Ibid.* 62 Though our wordes can not well bee forced to abyde the touch of Position and other rules of *Prosodia*. **1693** DRYDEN *Examen Poeticum* Ded., Ess. (ed. Ker) II. 11 For the benefit of those who understand not the Latin *prosodia*. **1702** ADDISON *Dial. Medals* i. (1726) 28, I should as soon expect to find the *Prosodia* in a Comb as Poetry in a Medal.

2. Correct pronunciation of words; the utterance of the sounds of a language according to rule; observance of the laws of prosody. *rare*.

1616 BULLOKAR *Eng. Expos., Prosodie*, true pronouncing of wordes. **a1637** B. JONSON *Eng. Gram.* i, A letter is an indivisible part of a syllabe, whose prosody, or right sounding, is perceived by the power. **1837** CARLYLE *Fr. Rev.* (1872) III. v. ii. 178 She expressed herself with a purity, with a harmony and prosody that made her language like music. **1842** MRS. GORE *Fascin.* 128 He heard a pure and eloquent voice recite with the most elegant and perfect prosody, these verses from the first satire of Persius.

3. *Linguistics*. In the theories of J. R. Firth and his followers: a phonological feature having as its domain more than one segment.

Prosodies include the class of 'suprasegmental' features such as intonation, stress, and juncture, but also some features which are regarded as 'segmental' in phonemic theory, e.g. palatalization, lip-rounding, nasalization.

1949 J. R. FIRTH in *Trans. Philol. Soc.* 1948 129 We may abstract those features which mark word or syllable initials and word or syllable finals or word junctions from the word, piece, or

sentence, and regard them syntagmatically as prosodies, distinct from the phonematic constituents which are referred to as units of the consonant and vowel systems. **1951** *Bull. School of Oriental & Afr. Stud.* XIII. 945 The prosodies abstracted by these treatments have included not only aspiration but also, e.g. yotization, labiovelarization, rhotacization, affrication, friction, and voice. **1957** *Proc. Univ. of Durham Philos. Soc.* I. Ser. B (Arts) 1. 3 *Prosodic analysis*... makes use of two types of element, Prosodies and Phonematic Units... Phonematic units refer to those features or aspects of the phonic material which are best regarded as referable to minimal segments, having serial order in relation to each other in structures... Structures are not, however, completely stated in these terms; a great part..of the phonic material is referable to prosodies, which are, by definition, of more than one segment in scope or domain of relevance, and may in fact belong to structures of any length. **1964** R. H. ROBINS *Gen. Linguistics* iv. 161 The relevant phonetic data may be assigned to such different categories of prosody as sentence prosodies, sentence part prosodies, word prosodies, syllable prosodies, and syllable part prosodies. **1966** J. T. BENDOR-SAMUEL in C. E. Bazell *In Memory of J. R. Firth* 31 There are three word prosodies: nasalization, yodization, and the absence of nasalization and yodization. **1968** [see [PHONEMATIC a. b](#)]. **1971** *Archivum Linguisticum* II. 68 In phonology, too,..the Firthian view was to reject the phoneme in favour of a syntagmatic concept, which was termed—perhaps not too happily—the ‘prosody’.

4. *attrib.*

1877 HALES *Spenser* (Globe) p. xxviii, Allying himself with these Latin prosody bigots, Spenser sinned grievously against his better taste.