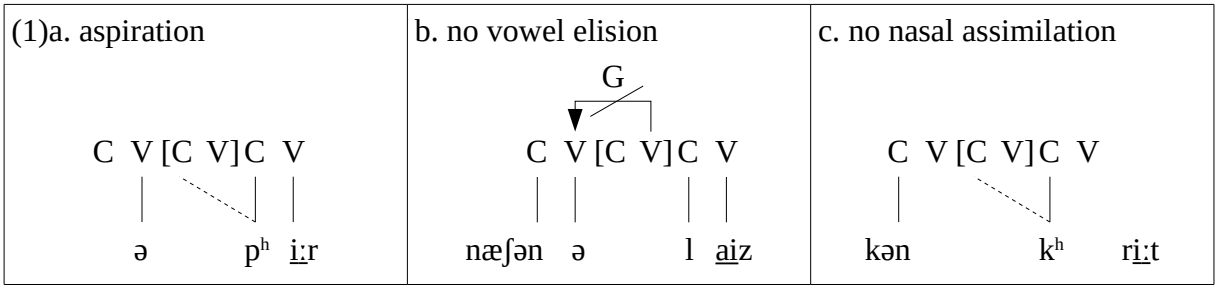
Ternary rhythm as a complex morphological domain

Quentin Dabouis (Clermont-Ferrand), Guillaume Enguehard (Orléans), Nicola Lampitelli (Tours)

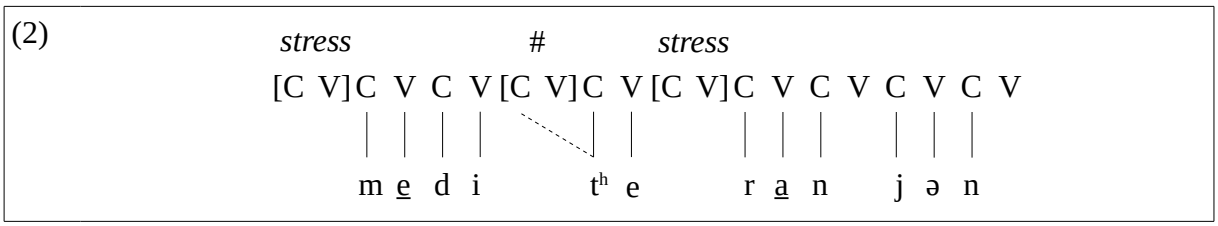
As is well-known, the notion of foot is generally not included in the representations of CVCV phonology (Lowenstamm, 1996)[1]. In this paper, we argue that the effects of foot (both segmental and rythmic) can be derived from the basic units of this framework.

1. We depart from the effects of English stress on the realization of segments: **i.** it involves an aspiration of voiceless plosive onsets; **ii.** it prevents elision of pre-tonic schwas; and **iii.** it prevents assimilation of pre-tonic nasal codas (Kenyon & Knott, 1949). Scheer & Ségéral (2001) account for the aspiration by assuming an extra [CV] inserted on the left of stressed syllables (1a). We show that this representation predicts the remaining effects of stress. First, if stressed syllables are preceded by an extra empty CV, pre-tonic schwas cannot be governed (1b). Thus, we do not expect them to be elided. Second, nasals cannot be assimilated in (1c) because the following consonant /k/ spreads to the empty CV provided by stress[2].



2. The same segmental effects can be observed (unexpectedly) before the third component of *dactylic feet* (e.g. mèdit[ʰ]erránean, an[ə]colúthon, mono[n]gahéla) (Davis & Cho, 2003). In CVCV, these effects are supposed to have the same representation as in (1), i.e. a left-inserted extra [CV]. However, this CV unit does not seem to be provided by stress. This raises a question: what motivates this CV unit?

3. Morphonological boundaries have also been claimed to introduce extra CV units (Lowenstamm, 1999; Pagliano, 2003). These CV-boundaries account for the same effects as stress (see Scheer, 2000). We argue that the effects observed in dactylic feet are due to a CV-boundary, not a CV-stress (2). We provide 3 arguments: **i.** aspiration also occurs in unstressed initial syllables, where we expect to find an initial boundary (e.g. p[ʰ]otáto) (Davis & Cho, 2003); **ii.** nasal assimilation does not occur across a prefix boundary (e.g. i[n]corréct); and **iii.** this CV unit appears where expletive infixation can appear (e.g. mìli-*fucking*-t[ʰ]arístic).



4. This boundary does not necessarily correspond to a morpheme boundary (sometimes it does, sometimes it does not). We will argue that all extra CVs correspond to the edge of a morphological template independent from the segmental content. Within this view, rhythm is a by-product of templatic activity. Accordingly, CVCV gives an interesting interpretation of what feet are: exponents of morphological organization.

1 Consistently with CVCV phonology, we do not distinguish between primary and secondary stress: thus, they are represented in the same way (i.e. underlined vowels).

2 The reader certainly remarks that the representation in (1c) involves successive empty nuclei, which are ill-formed in (1b). Following Pöchtrager (2001), we assume that coda sonorants are able to satisfy an adjacent empty nucleus.