Assignment 3 (due Tuesday, March 6 in class)

I. *A 'n B, A or B*

Constructions of the form [A 'n B], [A or B] provide one of the rare cases in English where speakers may alter word order without affecting meaning: [B 'n/or A] is usually synonymous with [A 'n/or B]. Yet despite this flexibility, English speakers consistently choose certain word orders over others:

strongly preferred	strongly dispreferred
hot 'n bothered	*bothered 'n hot*
sweet 'n sour	*sour 'n sweet*
salt 'n pepper	*pepper 'n salt*
short 'n sassy	*sassy 'n short*
Peter, Paul, 'n Mary[1]	*Paul, Peter, 'n Mary*
cream or sugar	*sugar or cream*
soup or salad	*salad or soup*
now or later	*later or now*

Give a precise description of the rhythmic structures associated with each member of the pair *Peter, Paul, 'n Mary* vs. *Paul, Peter, 'n Mary*, as well as **one other pair** from the above list. How might the differences in their rhythmic structures account for the preferences seen above?

II. Stress Placement in English Verbs

In class, we briefly noted that the default rules governing stress placement in English nouns differ from those for English verbs. In this problem, you will examine the latter set of rules.

A. For each of the following verbs, determine which syllable bears primary stress. (You need not determine whether/where any secondary stresses occur.) If you cannot decide where the primary stress falls in a particular verb, remember that you can use the "vocative chant" to investigate this question.

astonish	*maintain*	*collapse*	*run*
edit	*erode*	*torment*	*suck*
develop	*apply*	*adapt*	*tap*
imagine	*appear*	*usurp*	*sleep*
promise	*allow*	*convince*	*sit*

B. On the basis of your results from Part A, give a precise prose description of the rule(s) governing the placement of primary stress in English verbs.

[1] 60's folk trio of "Puff the Magic Dragon" fame…

III. [ə]-Deletion in American English

In class, we have observed that [ə] may delete in unstressed syllables:

choc{o}late	~	*choc'late*
cam{e}ra	~	*cam'ra*
pers{o}nal	~	*pers'nal*

(Throughout this problem, the deleted vowel appears in curly brackets.)
It turns out that the possibility of [ə]-deletion is restricted by the surrounding consonantal context. In this problem, you will examine these restrictions.

A. One restriction governing [ə]-deletion concerns the nature of the following consonant. On the basis of the following words, identify this restriction.

[ə]-deletion possible	[ə]-deletion impossible
sep{a}rate	*rock{e}ting*
ped{a}ling	*ball{o}ting*
def{i}nite	*goss{i}ping*
cel{e}ry	*opac{i}ty*
pris{o}ner	*ven{i}son*
jav{e}lin	*harmon{i}ca*
mack{e}rel	*Luc{i}fer*

B. Another restriction governing [ə]-deletion concerns the relationship between the preceding and the following consonant. On the basis of the following words, identify this restriction.

[ə]-deletion possible	[ə]-deletion impossible
fin{a}lly	*fel{o}ny*
gen{e}ral	*ir{o}ny*
fam{i}ly	*col{o}ny*
Val{e}rie	*car{o}ling*
cel{e}ry	*scar{i}ly*

IV. Vowel Alternations and the Great Vowel Shift

A. Consider the following pairs of morphologically related words:

divine ~ *divinity*
serene ~ *serenity*
sane ~ *sanity*

How do these pairs demonstrate the Great Vowel Shift in action? Be sure to refer to the articulatory qualities of the affected vowels in your answer.

B. In class (and in the Harley reading), we saw how similar vowel alternations, such as *staves ~ staff*, *deep ~ depth*, *wise ~ wisdom*, are explained by certain automatic phonological processes that affected vowel length in Middle English. First, briefly summarize our explanation for such pairs. Then, say why this explanation cannot be extended to the pairs in Part A.