Ling 103  Language Structure and Verbal Art  
Written Assignment #2  

Part A. Metrical Style  
Consider the following lines written by Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Pope and Shelley. Each line contains some metrical correspondence that would have made it unmetrical to at least one of the poets on the list. For each line, state the ‘anomalous’ correspondence, and then the poets (in this group) who would have considered the line unmetrical and why. Some lines are given in context to help the interpretation; the line for analysis is in italics.

Example:
Milton:     Down from the verge of Heav’n, Eternal wrauth

Burnt after them to the bottomless pit.

Answer. The word bottomless has its stressed syllable in W. Shakespeare, Spenser, Pope and Shelley would have rejected this, since there is no adjacent stress or phrase break which might permit this correspondence.

1 Milton:     Forthwith his former state and being forgets,

Forgets both joy and grief, pleasure and pain.

2 Spenser:    A Gentle Knight was pricking on the plain,

Y-clad in mighty arms and silver shield

Wherein old dints of deep wounds did remain

3 Shakespeare: Put out the Light, and then put out the Light:

If I quench thee, thou flaming Minister,
I can again thy former light restore.
4 Milton:  
*By the waters of Life, where ere they sat*

5 Spenser:
Her vomit full of books and papers was,  
With loathly frogs and toads, which eyes did lack,  
*And creeping sought way in the weedy grass*

6 Shakespeare:  
*.... The City cast*  
*Her people out upon her: and Anthony*  
Enthroned i’th’ Market-place, did sit alone,

7 Spenser:  
*There thirsty Tántalus hung by the chin*

**Part B. Wyatt and Tottel**

Below you will find two versions of the poem ‘They Flee From Me’ by Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542), a poet of the Tudor period. Wyatt’s verse is well-known for being metrically ‘irregular’, that is, of deviating from the usual rules of English verse, as exemplified by Shakespeare.

Wyatt’s publisher Richard Tottel took it upon himself to emend Wyatt’s verse to make it more ‘metrically regular’ in his view. The form of the poem ‘They Flee From Me’ which Tottel published is the second version below. Immediately preceding it is the version taken from the Egerton manuscript, which presumably reflects Wyatt’s true intentions (the poems in the manuscript are either in Wyatt’s handwriting or with corrections in his handwriting).
Version 1 from the Egerton manuscript:

They flye from me that sometyme did me seke
   With naked fote stalking in my chambre.
I have sene theim gentill tame and meke
   That nowe are wyld and do not remembre
   That sometyme they put theimself in daunger
To take bred at my hand; and nowe they raunge
Busely seking with a continuell chaunge.

Thancked be fortune, it hath ben othrewise
   Twenty tymes better; but once in speciall
In thin arraye after a pleasuant gyse,
   When her loose gowne from her shoulders did fall,
   And she me caught in her armes long and small;
Therewithall swetely did me kysse,
And softely said, *Dere hert, how like you this?*

It was no dreme, I lay brode waking.
   But all is torned thorough my gentilnes
Into a straunge fasshion of forsaking;
   And I have leve to go of her goodeness,
   And she also to use new fangilnes.
But syns that I so kyndely ame served,
I would fain knowe what she hath deserved.
They flee from me, that sometime did me seek
With naked foot stalking within my chamber.
Once have I seen them gentle, tame, and meek
That now are wild, and do not once remember
That sometime they have put themselves in danger
To take bread at my hand, and now they range,
Busily seeking in continual change.

Thanked be fortune, it hath been otherwise,
Twenty times better; but once especial,
In thin array, after a pleasant guise,
When her loose gown did from her shoulders fall,
And she me caught in her arms long and small,
And therewithal, so sweetly did me kiss
And softly said, “Dear heart, how like you this?”

It was no dream, for I lay broad awaking.
But all is turned now, through my gentleness,
Into a bitter fashion of forsaking.
And I have leave to go, of her goodness,
And she also to use newfangledness.
But since that I unkindly so am served,
How like you this, what hath she now deserved?
Problem.

1. Examine Tottel’s version first.

a. Are there any lines which are inadmissible according to the rules that we have been using in class?

b. Are there any ‘headless’ lines (where the initial W position is unoccupied?).

c. Are there any lines which require syncope or elision?

d. Are there any lines which require extra syllables at phrase boundaries?

For each of these questions, if the answer is yes, provide an analysis of the line using the procedure discussed in class (matching syllables to positions, indicating elisions, phrase breaks, extra positions, etc.)

2. Now compare Wyatt’s original with Tottel’s version.

a. Consider each line where Tottel made a change (you may ignore metrically irrelevant modernization of spelling in Tottel’s version). Offer an explanation for each change: why did Tottel consider the original line ‘unmetrical’?

b. Are all Wyatt’s lines which Tottel changed unmetrical according to the rules we have developed for Shakespeare’s meter? Why or why not? Provide analyses of each such line (using either the WS-template approach or, if you prefer, the grid theory.)