

Ling 103

Variation in metrical practice and metrical theory

SMP Stress Maximum Principle

Original SMP (Halle & Keyser 1966)

A *stress maximum* is a stressed syllable flanked by syllables with *less* stress within the same phrase.

Revised SMP (Halle & Keyser 1971)

A *stress maximum* is a *fully-stressed* syllable flanked by *unstressed* syllables within the same phrase

Some issues that arise for the SMP.

A. Adjacent stresses should have unconstrained distribution.

On the SMP, whenever there are two stressed syllables in a row, there can't be a metrical violation, since neither will constitute a stress maximum.

In general, this appears to be true.

1a. # w # s pattern

= boundary between words,

| = boundary between phrases

/ = boundary between feet // = change of speaker

' = stressed,

‐ = unstressed

This sort of sequence occurs abundantly. Examples from *Faerie Queene* by **Edmund Spenser** (1552-1599), a contemporary of Shakespeare:

And when / she list / poúr oút / her lar/ger sprite	FQ
Returned / to state/ly pa/lace of / Dáme Príde	FQ
So down / he fell, / as an / húge róck/y clift	FQ
Ne let / váiñ féars / procure / your need/less smart	FQ

1b. s # w # pattern

This sort of sequence also occurs abundantly.

And ov/er all / a bláck / stóle she / did throw,	FQ
That as / a swórd's / poínt through / his heart / did pierce.	FQ
And saw / the réd / cróss which / the knight / did bear	FQ
Rest is / their feast, / and áll / thíngs at / their will;	FQ

But some of the expected patterns are rare or absent

2a. ſ # w ſ pattern Example from Spenser (hexameter line):

As might / become / a squire / so **gréat** / **pérsóns** / to meet. FQ 1.5.49.9

No examples known in Shakespeare.

2b. s w # ſ pattern

Sometimes these lines may have had *Rhythm Rule Retraction*.

Not Cae/sar's valour / hath ó'er/thrown Án/tony	Ant. 4.15.19
The éx/treme dán/gers and / the drops / of blood	Cor. 4.5.70
With the / consent / of sú/preme Jóve , / inform	Cor. 5.3.79

But in other cases, it's doubtful that there was retraction:

With plu/mèd helm / thy slay/er be/gíns thréats	Lear 4.2.63
Commend / me to / my wife. / I'll re/túrn cónsul ;	Cor. 3.2.160
Should from / yond cloud / speak di/víne thíngs	Cor. 4.5.107
At this hour reigning there. // I'll belíeve bót	Temp. 3.3.29-30
To set / the ex/áct wéalth / of all / our states	4H1 4.8.47
Might cor/rúpt mínds / procure / knaves as / corrupt	H8 5.1.132

B. Phrase-peripheral positions should permit anything.

Note that sometimes the phrase boundary in question is *not* marked by punctuation.

Polysyllabic words:

Under / black stole / [híding / her bai/ted hook],	FQ
And his / faint steeds / [wátered / in o/ccean deep,	FQ
And the / high hills / [Títan / discov/erèd	FQ
And rush/èd forth / [húrling / her hi/deous tail]	FQ

Monosyllabic words:

The faul/ty souls / from thence / [broúght to / his heaven/ ly bower	FQ
That plucked / from us / [áll hope / of due / relief	FQ

But phrase-final position doesn't appear to have this privilege

š w | š pattern

No real examples known in Spenser or Shakespeare. Hypothetical examples:

A little lowly hermitage it was,

*In a / dále.| It / was by / a for/est's side,

*Quite far / from the / fólk,| that / did of/ten pass

*In tra/vel com/ing by / thére:| a / bit wide

There was an holy chapel edifie. (modified from Spenser)

C. There are a few instances in which a stress maximum in a monosyllabic word appears in W

š w š pattern

Than are / dréamt of / in your / philo/sophy Ham. 1.5.116

They may / véx us / with shot / or with / assault 1H6 1.4.13

To address some of these shortcomings, Kiparsky 1977 proposed a different Correspondence Rule. A simplified version of it is:

[MWC Monosyllabic Word Constraint \(Kiparsky 1977\)](#)

Simple MWC

A stressed syllable must appear in S position unless:

- it is in a *monosyllabic word*
- it follows a *phrase- or line- boundary*

This is effectively the Correspondence Rule that we have been using in class up to this point.

Some issues that arise for the Simple MWC

1. Are the stresses of monosyllabic words really irrelevant?

Although examples like

Than **are / dréamt of** / in your / philo/sophy Ham. 1.5.116

do occur, they are extremely rare — so rare that the SMP seemed like a reasonable hypothesis at first.

2. Are the subparts of compound words like *bed-chamber* or *love-lacking* single words? Or is the whole compound treated as a single word?

If an important difference is to be drawn between monosyllabic and polysyllabic words, then what happens to monosyllabic words that are *inside* of polysyllabic words, as in compounds?

3. Are stressed syllables in polysyllabic words ever in S position?

The SimpleMWC suggests that *adjacent stresses in polysyllabic words* could never occur, since one or the other has to be in W position:

Commend me to my wife. I'll return consul Cor. 3.2.160

Kiparsky suggested that these cases are repaired by the Rhythm Rule, but as we have seen there are cases in which that is unlikely.

A more adequate MWC requires some additional complexity:

Full MWC (modified slightly from Kiparsky 1977)

A stressed syllable must appear in S position unless:

- a. it follows a *phrase-* or *line-* boundary
 - b. it is in a *monosyllabic word* **and**
 - i. it precedes a *stronger* stress within the same phrase and line
or
 - ii. it follows a stressed syllable in the same phrase and line
or
 - iii. it is followed by a stressless function word with which it forms a structural unit (i.e. an *enclitic*)

Revisiting the patterns above

1. # w # s pattern w permitted by (i), provided s is stronger than w

And when / she list / **poùr oút** / her lar/ger sprite

But we should *not* get

w # s pattern

Since in English the strongest stress usually is the *final stressed word in a phrase*, this sort of structure is limited to certain types of compound-like words:

And we / your **líege** / **mèn** faith / unto / you plight líege is in S

*We thě / **líege mèn** / our faith / unto / you plight líege is in W

2. s # w # pattern w permitted by (ii)

And saw / the **rèd** / **cróss** which / the knight / did bear FQ

Be thou / the **tènth** / **Múse**, ten / times more / in worth Son. 38

Why should / my **hèart** / **thínk** that / a se/veral plot Son. 137.9

Grief fills / the **roòm** / **úp** of / my áb/sent child Jn. 3.4.93

And do / not **dròp** / **ín** for / an af/ terloss Son. 90

3. s w s pattern w permitted by (iii) provided following s is enclitic

Than **ăre** / **dréamt+öf** / in your / philo/sophy

4. s # w s pattern w not permitted because not in a monosyllabic word

Doesn't occur in Shakespeare. Rare example from Spenser (FQ 1.5.49.9):

? As might / become / a squire / so **gréat** / **pérsons** / to meet.

5. **s w # š** pattern w not permitted because not in a monosyllabic word

But examples of this sort *do* occur in Shakespeare:

Commend / me to / my wife. / I'll **ret/úrn cónsul**

Cor. 3.2.160

This remains a problem for the MWC.

6. **š # w | š** pattern w not permitted since doesn't fit (i-iii)

Doesn't occur.

*In **ă** / **dále.** | **It** / was by / a for/est's side,

7. **š # w # š** w not permitted since doesn't fit (i-iii)

*Which he / most **díd** / **cráve** **óf** / all earth/ly things

Youmans (1983) notes (effectively) that the *retúrn cónsul* cases would be allowed if in such cases we dropped the ‘monosyllable’ condition. Thus we can say:

Full MWC (2nd version, modified from Youmans 1983)

A *stressed syllable* must appear in S position *unless it:*

- a. follows a *line- or phrase-* boundary

Méwling / and puk/ing in / the nur/se’s arms

Appear / in per/son here / in court. / **Sílence.**

or

- b. precedes a *stronger stress* within the same phrase and line
i.e. it is *not* the strongest stress in its phrase

Or the / **blìnd Gód** / that doth / me thus / amate

Commend / me to / my wife. / I'll **re/túrn cónsul**

or

- c. is a *monosyllabic* word which follows a (sufficiently) stressed syllable in the same phrase and line

Why should / my **héart** / **thínk** that / a se/veral plot

Be thou / the **tènth** / **Múse**, ten / times more / in worth

or

- d. is a monosyllabic word which is followed by a stressless function word which ‘leans’ on it structurally

Than are / **dréamt+óf** / in your / philo/sophy

Some metrical style variants

1. One might ask if the monosyllabic/polysyllabic distinction is relevant to all poets.

In fact, **Percy Shelley** (1792-1822) used stress clashes in a way suggesting that he extended condition (c) above to polysyllabic words. In other words, occasionally Shelley will allow a stressed syllable in a polysyllabic word in a W position provided there is a preceding stress:

Forbáde / Shádow / to fall / from leaf / and stone

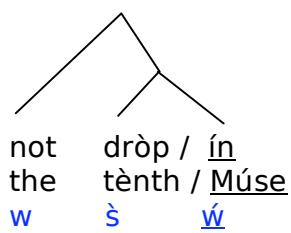
And **wíld / róses** / and i/vy ser/pentine.

Occasional examples are also found in **Spenser** (hexameter lines):

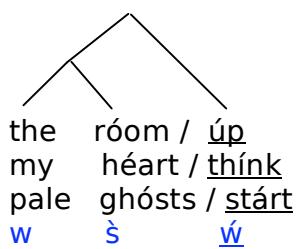
As might / become / a squire / so **gréat / pérsóns** / to greet FQ 1.10.7.9

High Cae/sar, **gréat / Pómpey**, / and fierce / Anton/ius FQ 1.5.49.9

2. Condition (c) is subject to certain complications in many poets. Kiparsky identifies two situations, which distinguish the practice of Elizabethan poets such as Spenser and Shakespeare from later poets such as **John Milton (1608-1674)** and **Alexander Pope (1688-1744)**.



Here the word in **s** is structurally closer to the following word than to the preceding word
(not permitted by Milton & Pope)
(permitted by Shakespeare & Spenser)



Here the word in **s** is structurally closer to the preceding word than to the following word
(permitted by all the poets)

Milton and Pope, unlike Shakespeare and Spenser, *do not* permit the first type, but *do* permit the second type. The preceding stress is "stronger" in, e.g. *ròom* and *héart* than in *dròp* and *tènþ* because the former words end their own phrases, while the latter words don't:

[[my héart] thínk] [the [tènþ Múse]]

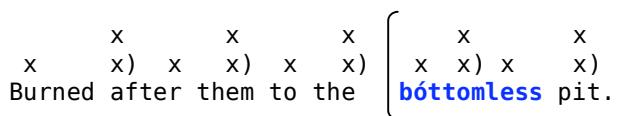
Try putting a tiny pause after *heart* and after *tenth*. Which sounds better?

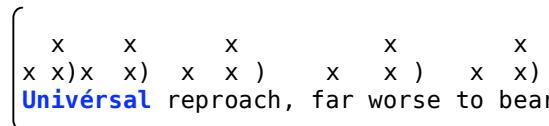
3. **Milton's** verse has a specific property that sets him apart from Shakespeare, Spenser and Pope.

A stressed syllable in a polysyllabic word is permitted in W position provided that the first syllable of the word is also in W position.

If each W S is a *foot* then this is equivalent to saying that the *left edge of the word in question must coincide with the left edge of a foot*.

Examples:

Burned after them to the  bóttomless pit. PL 6.866

 Univérsal reproach, far worse to bear PL 6.34

Lines of this sort were noticed as unusual by early commentators. But they are sufficiently numerous that it's quite clear that Milton obeyed a slightly different metrical grammar than the other poets.

4. Alexander Pope and 'the Augustan Age'

In the early 18th century English intellectuals were enamored with classical civilization, in particular the Roman Empire during the rule of the Emperor Augustus. For this reason, this era was characterized by a *polished classicism* in which metrical form was more rigorously controlled. Pope's verse represents in many respects a very conservative type of iambic meter with few attempts at pushing the limits of what was acceptable.

In general, we find that although Pope allows for the stressed syllable of a polysyllabic word to appear at the beginning of a *line*, he does not allow this in the middle of the line. He does not allow extrametrical syllables in the *middle of the line*, although he does at the end of the line. (Interestingly, Shakespeare allows them in the middle of the line only in the plays, but not in the poems.)

Pope 'Rape of the Lock' I.121-132

And now, unveil'd, the *Toilet* stands display'd,
Each Silver Vase in mystic Order laid.
First, rob'd in White, the Nymph intent adores
With Head uncover'd, the *Cosmetic Pow'rs*.
A heav'nly Image in the Glass appears,
To that she bends, to that her Eyes she rears;
Th'inferior Priestess, at her Altar's side,
Trembling, begins the sacred Rites of Pride.
Unnumber'd Treasures ope at once, and here
The various Off'rings of the World appear;
From each she nicely culls with curious Toil,
And decks the Goddess with the glitt'ring Spoil.

5. Tudor-era experiments with meter

Certain English poets of the 16th century such as **George Gascoigne (c. 1525-1577)** and **George Puttenham (1529-1590)** tried to formulate explicit theories of meter (not entirely successfully).

During this time of metrical experimentation two poets in particular — **Thomas Wyatt (1503-1542)** and **Henry Howard, Earl of Surrey (c. 1517-1547)** — are today known for a metrical style which departs significantly from the norm seen in Shakespeare and Spenser (inherited, ultimately, from Chaucer) and continued (with some variation) up to the 19th century.

A poem of Wyatt:

Luckes, my faire falcon, and your fellowes all,
 How well **pleasaunt** yt were your libertie!
 Ye not forsake **me** that faire might ye befall.
 But they that sometyme lykt my compayne,
 Like lyse awaye from ded **bodies** thei crall:
 Loe, what a profe in light adversytie!
 But ye my birdes I swear by all your belles,
 Ye be my fryndes, and so be but few elles.

In modern English spelling:

Lucks, my fair falcon, and your fellows all,
 How well pleasant it were your liberty!
 Ye not forsake me that fair might ye befall
 But they that sometime liked my company,
 Like lice away from dead bodies they crawl:
 Lo, what a proof in light adversity!
 But ye my birds I swear by all your bells,
 Ye be my friends, and so be but few else.

Another poem of Wyatt:

Ø The longe **love**, | that in my thought doeth harbar ?
 And in myn hert doeth kepe his residence,
 Into my face | **preseth** with bolde pretence,
 Ø And therin **campeth**, | **spreding** his baner. ?
 Ø She that me **lerneth** | to love and suffre, ?
 And will that my **trust** and lustes negligence
 Be rayned by reason, | shame and reverence,
 Ø With his hardiness | **taketh** displeasur. ?
 Wherewithall, | unto the hertes **forrest** he fleith,
 Leving his entreprise with payn and cry,
 And ther him hideth | and not appereth. ?
 What may I do | Ø when my maister fereth ?
 But in the feld | with him to lyve and dye?
 For goode is the **liff**, | ending faithfully.

Summary

configuration	Spenser	Shakespeare	Milton	Pope	Shelley
line-initial w	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
line-medial, phrase-initial w	yes	yes	yes	no	yes
line-final extra syllable	yes*	yes	yes	yes	yes
pre-caesura extra syllable	no	yest†	no	no	yes
MWC b (<i>Or the blind Gód ...</i>)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
MWC b w/polysyllable (<i>retúrn cónsul</i>)	yes	yes	(yes)	no	yes
MWC c type 1 (<i>the tènth Múse</i>)	yes	yes	no	no	yes
MWC c type 2 (<i>my héart thínk</i>)	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes
MWC c w/polysyllable (<i>wild róses</i>)	yes ?	no	(yes)	no	yes
MWC d (<i>are dréamt+of</i>)	no	yes	no	no	no?
left-edge exception (<i>bóttomless pit</i>)	no	no	yes	no	no

* Spenser uses line final extrametrical syllables sparingly in the early books of FQ

† Shakespeare permits pre-caesura extra syllables in play dialogue, but not in poetry

Technically Milton permits the *wild róses* and *retúrn cónsul* types through the left-edge exception that permits *bóttomless pit*, but examples of this type are fairly rare in Milton