

**The Role of Phrasal Stress in Shakespeare's *Lucrece* and *the Winter's Tale***

Senior Paper

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Meter in accentual-syllabic verse is a tool for structuring the distribution of accent or prominence in a verse line. Four kinds of accentual-syllabic meter - iambic, anapestic, trochaic, dactylic - are made available to English poets by convention, and these specify general patterns for the distribution of accent. There is no reason, however, to assume that these four types of meter represent a "normative prosody" (Cureton 8); that these meters derive from the norms of English prosody. These meters find their basis in Latin and Greek. A trend in verse scholarship has been "to reduce the very different structures of rhythmic beating/meter and rhythmic phrasing/grouping into just one, structurally flat form that achieves its effect by pitting a rhythmic norm against various unstructured departures from it" (Cureton 7). By confounding meter and prosody, this view ignores the greater rhythmic potential of English prosody beyond those four meters prescribed by convention. "Variation" becomes a blanket term to classify these other rhythms. This usage is unscientific in the extreme. Richard D. Cureton issues an imperative for the advancement of verse scholarship: We [must] separate phrasing [or prosody] from meter in a principled way and feather out the structural features of each as they stand in a positive and equal relation as opposing rhythmic 'components' rather than as they stand in a negative relation as metrical norm vs. metrical variation. (9) We must begin to think of the verse line as the embodiment and the reconciliation of the disparate rhythms represented by meter and prosody and not as a more or less accurate approximation of some metric norm, whether that norm is iambic pentameter, trochaic tetrameter or any other available verse form. To begin to see the development of the split between meter and prosody, we must return to Early Modern English.

Early Modern English prosody results in part from changes in morphology and subsequent changes to phrase structure. Morphological changes include the breakdown of the inflectional system; subsequent changes to phrase structure include a greater reliance on prepositions to mediate syntactic function. Linguists agree that English has always been poor in inflection in comparison to Greek and Latin. Already in Old English, the relatively few inflectional paradigms - only four - are limited in function:

The OE system had a number of inherent weaknesses that would contribute to its ultimate loss. First, almost no paradigm contained the maximum amount of differentiation, and some paradigms had so few distinctions as to make the entire inflectional group virtually useless in distinguishing function within the sentence (Millward 94). Here we see that limited inflection is not exclusive to Early Modern English; that it begins with Old English. But by the 16<sup>th</sup> century, English morphology becomes so far reduced that "Early Modern English cannot be considered a fully inflected language" (Goerlach 80). This complete loss of inflection ultimately changes the nature of English phrase structure. The "continuous leveling and loss of endings now makes it necessary to express some syntactical functions by 'other means'" (Goerlach 79). These 'other means' ultimately describe and inscribe the rhythmic possibilities of English verse, for these 'other means' include a greater reliance on prepositions, which are generally unstressed, to mediate syntactic function. English phrases now manifest wildly different rhythms depending on their case, and these rhythms do not necessarily conform to the four standard meters provided by convention. The significant linguistic changes leading in to the Early Modern period further articulate the split between meter and prosody. In Latin

and Greek, meter may reflect a normative prosody, but in Early Modern English, the four standard meters have no basis in the norms of English prosody. The English Renaissance poet has two options: he may preserve the integrity of the meter at the expense of phrasing, or he may employ the kinds of phrases indicative of Early Modern English and push the limits of the meter. William Shakespeare falls into this second category of poets. Incorporating developments in structural linguistics from the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century into a study of prosody will fulfill Cureton's imperative: to discover structural features in Shakespeare's phrasing, to go beyond the weak and unscientific concept of "variation" to a fuller account of Shakespeare's versification.

Before examining Shakespeare's style of versification, understanding the style of other, more formal poets will help situate him with regard to meter. Some Renaissance poets choose to preserve the integrity of their chosen meter at the expense of phrasing. These poets practice formalism, and Henry Howard, the Earl of Surrey is among them. George T. Wright offers a summary of the methods of the Tudor Poets:

Tudor poetry treated the iambic pentameter line as the sum of two phrases, the first of four syllables, the second of six. To meet this structural requirement poets from Surrey to Sidney understood that they needed to find English phrases that filled the measurements . . . For such an art, the phrase is clearly subordinate to the line (147). A lack of sensitivity to phrasing is apparent in this style of versification. It fails to exploit the full rhythmic potential of the language. In this case, "the verse becomes an arrangement of phrases-that-meet-the-requirement, not a form that makes full use of the

rhythmic resources of the English language" (Wright 148). A sonnet from Surrey highlights the limitations of this style of versification:

Th' Assyrians' king, in peace with foul desire

And filthy lust that stained his regal heart.

In war, that should set princely hearts afire,

Vanquished did yield for want of martial art.

The dint of swords from kisses seemed strange,

And harder than his lady's side, his targe;

From glutton feasts to soldier's fare, a change,

His helmet, far above a garland's charge.

Who scarce the name of manhood did retain,

Drenched in sloth and womanish delight,

Feeble of sprite, unpatient of pain,

When he had lost his honor and his right

(Proud, time of wealth; in storms, appall'd with dread),

Murdered himself, to show some manful deed. (*Norton . . . 572*) Notice

here that lines 1, 2, 5, 11 and 14 all conform to the model described by Wright: "the sum of two phrases, the first of four syllables, the second of six." Also, excepting line 8, no phrase contains an odd number of syllables and no phrase begins mid-foot. The integrity of the meter is the highest concern here, not the greater potential of English phrasing. In this particular sonnet, indicative of Tudor poetry, "the phrase is clearly subordinate to the line." This is formalism.

A definite change in thinking about meter begins with Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, when he adapts blank verse for the Elizabethan stage. Marlowe's reinterpretation of blank verse emphasizes phrasing over meter and comes closer to the rhythms of "ordinary speech" (Greenblatt 191); that is, it comes closer to the realities of English prosody. Stephen Greenblatt imagines how an Elizabethan audience might have received Marlowe's reinterpretation of meter:

The hushed crowd was already tasting Tamburlaine's power in the unprecedented energy and commanding eloquence of the play's blank verse - the dynamic flow of unrhymed five-stress, ten syllable lines - that the author, Christopher Marlowe, had mastered for the stage. This verse [was] like the dream of what ordinary speech would be like were human beings something greater than they are (191).

Greenblatt's appeal to the perceived norm of ordinary speech implies the difference between meter and prosody already discussed. That Marlowe's blank verse approximates ordinary speech confirms his emphasis on phrasing rather than meter. Thus Marlowe's reinterpretation of blank verse fulfills a very real need in English versification, the need for a verse form suited to all the contingencies of English phrasing. This loose interpretation of blank verse provides a form strong enough to constitute a pattern but remains close to the realities of English phrasing. Marlowe is an original among that category of poets who employ the kinds of phrases indicative of Early Modern English at the expense of meter.

If Marlowe begins a revolution in thinking about meter, then Shakespeare is the one to carry it out. Shakespeare's phrasing pushes the limits of his chosen meter, iambic pentameter. His later play *The Tempest* shows the extent of his play with meter:

If by your art, my dearest father, you have  
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.  
The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch  
But that the sea, mounting to th' welkin's cheek,  
Dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered  
With those that I saw suffer. A brave vessel  
(Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her)  
Dashed all to pieces. O, the cry did knock  
Against my very heart! Poor souls, they perished.  
Had I been any god of power, I would  
Have sunk the sea within the earth or ere  
It should the good ship so have swallowed and  
The fraughting souls within her (1.2.1-13).

The regard for phrasing displayed here results in frequent violations of the line. Phrases run over the ends of lines, continuing on up to eleven syllables. With the application of elision in all possible instances, six of the thirteen lines above contain more than the prescribed ten syllables. Sometimes, these phrases continue into the next line. Beginning in line one, the verb phrase *have put* is enjambed. Beginning in line ten, the verb phrase *would have sunk* carries over. Here is a sheer unwillingness to subject the phrase to the authority of the line.

Shakespeare's unorthodox phrasing demands violations of both meter and line.

Consider this particular pair of lines from above:

/ u u / u u / u u / u

Dashes the fire out. O, I have suffered

U / U / U / U U U / U

With those that I saw suffer. A brave vessel

In the first line, no phrase exhibits an iambic rhythm. *Dashes the fire out* may exhibit a dactylic rhythm, but this classification does not extend to the whole line, because */ have suffered is* clearly anapestic. In this line, Shakespeare employs phrases whose rhythms counter one another to achieve the semblance of an iambic rhythm. Also, the final phrases of each line end on a weak syllable, and Shakespeare must extend the line by one syllable to keep a stressed syllable in the final strong position. Here, Shakespeare violates both meter and line with his phrasing and becomes the kind of Renaissance poet who affirms phrasing over form.

In light of the growing separation of meter and phrasing in the Early Modern period, tools provided by a traditional accentual-syllabic analysis of meter become increasingly inadequate. This analysis works with a set of four standard meters - iambic, anapestic, trochaic, dactylic - and a set of two substitutions or variants - spondaic, pyrrhic. Verse forms established by convention determine the kind and number of feet per line - iambic pentameter, trochaic tetrameter, etc (Abrams 168). While this analysis can easily and accurately *describe* all lines of canonical English verse, it can also be used to describe many random lines of prose, provided they contain the correct number of syllables. The problem with this analysis is that it provides no principled means to



separate out unmetrical lines from metrical ones. Or, in other words, it cannot distinguish between prose and verse and whatever stylistic features might belong to each. This analysis is merely descriptive. Linguist Morris Halle lists criteria for an "adequate theory of prosody:"

A good theory . . . would be expected to do more than [describe]; it would also help us to understand the nature of metrical verse and illuminate the relationship between a speaker's everyday linguistic competence and his ability to judge verses as metrical or unmetrical, as complex or simple ("The Iambic Pentameter" 175).

An "adequate theory of prosody" must consider the poet/reader's tacit knowledge of their language, their linguistic competence, and establish connections between linguistic competence and the poet/reader's shared assumptions about the nature of verse. Halle's demands for constructing an "adequate theory of prosody" are essentially those of the generative linguist for constructing a theory of a language, or what is the same thing, a grammar. According to the generative linguist, a theory of language must make explicit the "linguistic intuition of the native speaker" (Chomsky 19), his or her competence. Once we acknowledge the growing gap between meter and phrasing in Shakespeare's verse, we must begin to fill in the nebulous space between norm and "variation" with precise structural descriptions of prosodic rules, which find their basis in a poet/reader's linguistic competence. The breakthroughs of generative linguistics from the past fifty years make this endeavor possible. Let us now examine the basic assumptions of generative linguistics to see what aspects of linguistic competence pertain to prosody.

Generative linguistics envisions a complete reordering of grammar, viewing syntax as the highest level of organization in a grammar. Noam Chomsky, who is credited as the original generative linguist, describes the organization of a generative grammar early on in his book *Aspects of the Theory of Syntax*:

The syntactic component specifies an infinite set of abstract formal objects, each of which incorporates all information relevant to the interpretation of a particular sentence . . . The phonological component of a grammar determines the phonetic form of a sentence generated by the syntactic rules. That is, it relates a structure generated by the syntactic component to a phonetically represented signal. The semantic component determines the semantic interpretation of a sentence. That is, it relates a structure generated by the syntactic component to a certain semantic representation. Both the semantic and phonological components are therefore purely interpretive (16).

So there are three components to a generative grammar: the syntactic, the phonological and the semantic. The syntactic component generates the base for the application of the phonological and semantic components. Thus syntax becomes the highest level of organization in a grammar because it contains in a rudimentary form the information made explicit by the application of the phonological and semantic components; it contains "all information relevant to a single interpretation of a particular sentence" (Chomsky 16). The generative linguist's complete reorganization of grammar and the subordination of all levels of grammar to syntax reveal certain auxiliary functions of the

phonological component that were not previously apparent. These new and previously overlooked functions in phonology mean a great deal for English prosody.

"Phrasal stress" is an auxiliary function of the phonological component to syntax. Realizing the importance of this concept in the study of prosody is only possible after the generative linguists' small revolution in the organization of grammar and the subordination of all levels of grammar to syntax. Phrasal stress is the most prominent stress in a phrase and marks that phrase off as a complete syntactic unit. Morris Halle describes phrasal stress thusly:

The fact that a sequence of words constitutes a phrase . . . is signaled by giving greater prominence to the main stress of one word than to the main stress of all the rest (*Essay on Stress* 263).

Each syntactic constituent of a sentence marks itself off with phrasal stress. By its subordination to syntax, the phonological component is able to code syntactic information through phrasal stress. This fact has important consequences for prosody. Phrasal stress represents a reliable tool for establishing/confirming meter, because the poet can never downplay it for the sake of meter; to do so would interfere with the interpretation of a sentence by confusing the syntactic information coded in the stress contours of the phrase. An example from Shakespeare's *Lucrece* helps to clarify the concept of phrasal stress:

u / u u / uu / u / u

And in thy dead arms do I mean to place him (517). This first scansion is correct, but this second one, although perfectly iambic, is not.

u / u / u / u / u / u

And in thy dead arms do I mean to place him The line is the sum of three phrases: *and in thy dead arms, do I mean, and to place him*. In the first phrase, *arms* represents phrasal stress but not *dead*, to stress *dead* would obscure phrasal stress. In the second, *mean* represents phrasal stress. And finally, in the third phrase, *place* represents phrasal stress. In this line the demands of phrasal stress produce an anapestic rhythm. Again, Shakespeare's phrasing is at odds with the demands of meter. Generative linguistics' discovery of phrasal stress as part of a speaker/hearer's or a poet/reader's linguistic competence represents an important breakthrough in prosody. In addition to phrasal stress we must also discuss lexical stress:

Lexical stress is the stress that occurs in the most strongly stressed syllable of a lexical word. Lexical words are nouns, verbs, adjectives, and nonclitic adverbs. Pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions and auxiliary verbs bear no lexical stress (*Poetic Rhythm* 28). The lexical stress rule is a generalization about prosody. Nouns, verbs, adjectives, and non-clitic adverbs *generally* receive stress, while pronouns, conjunctions, prepositions and auxiliary verbs *generally* receive no stress. The demands of poetic meter can cause non-lexical words to receive stress or lexical words to receive no stress. Also, the demands of phrasal stress will override lexical stress. Consider this line from Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*:

U / U /

Her sweet perfections, with one self king (1.1.40).

*King* represents phrasal stress, and to stress *self* would obscure phrasal stress and therefore the syntactic interpretation of a sentence. The lexical and phrasal stress rules are explicit formulations of facts of linguistic competence, and their application to meter will bring us closer to Halle's notion of an "adequate theory of prosody" by tracing the relationship between a poet/reader's linguistic competence and their assumptions about the nature of verse. Furthermore, the subordination of lexical to phrasal stress when necessary is also "given by the phonological component of the grammar itself (Harvey 32-33); it represents a fact of linguistic competence. I have surveyed the intersection of lexical and phrasal stress in certain kinds of adjective-noun constructions in *Lucrece* and *The Winter's Tale* to see how the intersection of lexical and phrasal stress is used to confirm or disrupt meter. The comparison of Shakespeare's early verse (*Lucrece*) and his late verse (*The Winter's Tale*) will show his growing preference for the original rhythms of English phrasing.

Phrasal stress is a reliable tool for establishing and confirming meter. A poet can never downplay phrasal stress for the sake of meter without possibly confusing the interpretation of a sentence. Shakespeare makes expedient use of the conflicting demands of lexical and phrasal stress to establish his meter. I focus on one particular intersection of lexical and phrasal stress in *Lucrece* and *The Winter's Tale*. When the main stress of an attributive adjective is directly adjacent to the main stress of the noun it modifies, like in the noun phrase *strong pirate*, and this noun represents phrasal stress, the adjective receives no stress, thus creating an iambic rhythm. This kind of construction works as a reliable tool for establishing and confirming an iambic meter. Consider this line from *The Winter's Tale*:

And our *weak spirits* ne'er been higher reared [italics mine] (1.2.72) The phrase *weak spirits* confirms the iambic rhythm in the third and fourth positions. Sometimes, Shakespeare even composes whole lines out of this lexical/phrasal stress dynamic whose rhythms are perfectly iambic, like in *Lucrece*:

Huge rocks, high winds, strong pirates, shelves, and sand (335). The conflict of lexical and phrasal stress between attributive adjectives and the nouns they modify becomes an important tool in composition, and Shakespeare uses it in all his verse to establish and confirm meter. Morris Halle's criteria for an "adequate theory of prosody" include illuminating the relationship of linguistic competence to a poet/reader's assumptions about the nature of verse. The connection established here between phrasal stress, an aspect of linguistic competence, and meter fulfills part of Halle's demand and brings us towards a fuller understanding of Shakespeare's style of versification. Furthermore, the particular intersection of lexical and phrasal stress that I have chosen to consider calls attention to very different styles of versification in Shakespeare's early verse and his late verse.

Compared to *The Winter's Tale*, *Lucrece* demonstrates a greater reliance on phrasal stress to establish meter, and this in turn shows a greater concern for the integrity of meter in Shakespeare's early non-dramatic poetry. In some stanzas, the reliance on the conflict of lexical and phrasal stress to establish meter is almost excessive. Consider this stanza:

'Come, Philomel, that sing'st of ravishment,  
 Make thy *sad grove* in my dishevell'd hair:  
 As the *dank earth* weeps at thy languishment,

So I at each *sad strain* will strain a tear,  
 And with *deep groans* the diapason bear;  
 For burden-wise I'll hum on Tarquin still,  
 While thou on Tereus descant'st better skill [italics mine] (*Lucrece* 1128-  
 1134).

Five of the seven lines in this stanza use the conflict of lexical and phrasal stress to confirm an iambic rhythm. Although Shakespeare uses this technique in *The Winter's Tale*, he uses it with far less abundance. The almost excessive reliance on phrasal stress to establish meter in his early non-dramatic poetry shows not only a concern for the integrity of meter but also a reluctance to employ the subtle and original rhythms of English phrasing. I regard Shakespeare's later verse as the product of a maturation in his style. But to see this requires that we turn away from the role of phrasal stress in confirming meter to its role in disrupting meter. In the increasing use of phrasal stress to disrupt meter, an antagonism towards the demands of meter begins to show.

Of all the attributive adjectives in *Lucrece* whose main stress occurs in conflict with the main stress of the nouns they modify, forty-five appear in even-odd positions, meaning that they potentially disrupt the iambic meter. But of these forty-five, only nineteen represent a conflict between lexical and phrasal stress that actually disrupts meter. Many of these forty-five instances where the attributive adjective occupies an even position, a metrically strong position, occur in a phrase where the noun modified does not represent phrasal stress, like in the noun phrase *with their fresh fall's haste* (*Lucrece* 650) and in the phrase *to the base shrub 'sfoot* (Ibid. 664). In these cases, rather than disrupting meter the attributive adjective confirms meter through a shift in phrasal stress

away from the noun it modifies. Phrasal stress always falls on the rightmost syllable of a phrase (Kager 10), and factors of word order effect the distribution of phrasal stress, like in these possessive constructions. So this leaves us with only nineteen out of forty-five cases, where the conflict of lexical and phrasal stress between attributive adjectives and the nouns they modify disrupts meter. Compared to *The Winter's Tale*, nineteen is relatively few. *The Winter's Tale* contains forty-nine attributive adjectives in a metrically strong position, and in thirty-nine of these, the conflict of lexical and phrasal stress forces an unstressed syllable into a metrically strong position. With only nineteen cases in *Lucrece*, which is an example of Shakespeare's early verse, and thirty-nine cases in *The Winter's Tale*, an example of his late verse, a definite shift in Shakespeare's style of versification is apparent. The tendency to use reliable metrical tools, like stress subordinated-attributive adjectives, to disrupt meter in his late verse belies a growing preference for the original rhythms of English phrasing.

Shakespeare uses phrasal stress more often in *The Winter's Tale* than in *Lucrece* to disrupt meter. Furthermore, the disruptions in each tend to occur in different line positions. In *Lucrece*, the majority of deviations created by stress-subordinated attributive adjectives occur in the second and fourth line positions, metrically strong positions. In this first example, deviation occurs in second position, and in the second example, deviation occurs in the fourth.

u u / u u / u / u / u

Whose *grim aspect* sets every joint ashaking (*Lucrece* 124). U / U U

/ U U / U / And now *this pale swan* in her wat'ry nest [italics mine]

(*Lucrece* 1611)



*The Winter's Tale* tends to have a number of deviations further along in the line, in the fourth position and many in the sixth position. The first example shows deviation in the fourth position, and in the next example, the sixth position.

u / u u / u u / u u /

Thou want'st a *rough pash* and the things that I have [italics mine]

(1.2.128).

U /UU U U / U U /

How prettily the *young swain* seems to wash [italics mine] (IV.4.365). The tendency in *The Winter's Tale* is to place deviations further along in the line. This leaves fewer opportunities for meter to reestablish itself. Reuven Tsur explains that the line position where deviation occurs ultimately determines the chances of meter confirming itself again later in the line:

Deviations from the metric pattern do not occur in a random way. A deviation at one point of the line requires confirmation at another, near point.

If the first foot is "inverted," one may expect to find a stressed syllable in precisely the fourth position. If there is no stressed syllable in the fourth position, one may expect to find it in the second and probably the sixth . . .

There are special "centres of gravity," so to speak around which the unstressed and deviant syllables can be grouped (*Poetic Rhythm* 35).

If an unstressed syllable falls in the second or fourth positions, there remain up to four strong positions to reestablish the meter. If a disruption of meter occurs further along in the line, it becomes more difficult for meter to confirm itself again, with fewer available

metrically strong positions. Yet this is exactly the tendency of deviations in *The Winter's Tale*, to occur late in the line. In *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare places deviations in the line further towards the end, reducing the chances for reconciliation. This demonstrates an increasing antagonism to the demands of prescribed meter and a growing preference for the subtle rhythms of English phrasing.

Several lines from *The Winter's Tale* constitute a flat out denial of prescribed meter and an absolute privileging of phrasing. In these lines, a stress-subordinated attributive adjective occurs in the final position of the line, forcing phrasal stress into an extrametrical eleventh position. Because these lines deny the final and most critical position in the iambic pentameter, they leave no room for meter to resume. Here are ten examples where the conflict of lexical and phrasal stress between attributive adjectives and the nouns they modify completely denies meter:

You were pretty lordings then? We were *queen* (1.2.62).

Present our services to a fine *new prince* (II. 1.17).

And favor of the climate. As by *strange fortune* (II.3.178).

Even then will rush to knowledge. Go. *Fresh horses* (III. 1.21).

And I but dreamed it. As you were past *all shame* (III.2.83).

I am barred, like one infectious. My *third comfort* (III.2.97).

So filled and so becoming. In pure *white robes* (III.3.21).

The crown imperial; lilies of *all kinds* (IV.4.126).

But shorten thy life one week. - And thou, *fresh piece* (IV.4.421).

Even with such life of majesty - *warm life* (V.3.34).

I acknowledge one possible objection to these examples; one may apply elision to the word *imperial* in the line that begins, "The crown imperial. . .," thereby shortening it to ten syllables. All other lines admit no elision and remain eleven and sometimes twelve syllables long. *Lucrece* contains no such examples, and these lines seem proof of my argument that Shakespeare undertakes a reevaluation of meter later in his career. By the time of *The Winter's Tale*, Shakespeare's phrasing is minimally restricted by the demands of prescribed meter.

In closing, and in defense of Shakespeare's assault on prescribed meter, I cite the Halle-Keyser theory of meter. In his theory of meter, Morris Halle attempts to follow up on his demands for an "adequate theory of prosody." Recall that the criteria for this theory of meter are based on the principles of generative linguistics, in which linguistic competence, "the linguistic intuition of the native speaker" (Chomsky 19), represents the ultimate authority for determining the adequacy of a theory of language. Halle's project attempts "to understand the nature of metrical verse [by illuminating] the relationship between a speaker's everyday linguistic competence and his ability to judge verse as metrical or unmetrical, as complex or simple" ("The Iambic Pentameter" 175). The theory takes into account certain facts of linguistic competence with a direct bearing on prosody, like phrasal stress. The theory provides a tool, the concept of the stress-maximum, which represents all kinds of stress, like phrasal stress, that the poet can never downplay for the sake of meter, and asserts that no "metrical" line contains a stress-maximum in a metrically weak position. Halle describes the stress-maximum as a "stressed syllable located between two unstressed syllables in the same syntactic constituent within a line of verse" ("The Iambic Pentameter" 180). Since Halle's

formulation of his theory in the late 1960s less than sixty examples of stress-maxima in a weak position have been found in canonical English poetry (Tsur 359-62). More than half of these lines belong to John Milton, and only five belong to William Shakespeare, one of the most prolific poets of the English language (Tsur 359-62). That Shakespeare is able to continually affirm phrasing over meter and still produce lines that are recognizable as iambic pentameter is a testament to the subtlety of rhythm in his verse. Shakespeare treads the thin line between meter and phrasing but remains always at the very limit of meter.

I proposed to go beyond the weak and unscientific term "variation" and discover structural features in Shakespeare's phrasing while incorporating developments in structural linguistics from the later half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. I examined the conflict of lexical and phrasal stress between attributive adjectives and the nouns they modify and found that Shakespeare uses this dynamic throughout his career to establish meter. I found also that he uses the same dynamic to disrupt meter and create more subtle rhythms. Furthermore, he uses the reliable tool of phrasal stress to disrupt meter in drastically different ways throughout his career. The deviations in *Lucrece* and *The Winter's Tale* are of decidedly different characters and reflect different levels of concern for the integrity of meter, with his later verse manifesting a lesser concern for meter and a greater concern for phrasing. My analysis is limited to attributive adjectives and two selected works, *Lucrece* and *The Winter's Tale*. There remains yet much territory to be explored in Shakespeare's verse, incorporating the recent developments in structural linguistics to these same purposes.

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