

Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Shelley's *The Cenci*: Versification

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Abstract: The article describes the development of English iambic pentameter during 260 years, 1561–1821. The evolution of the versification went in waves: strict (Renaissance) – loose (Baroque) – strict (Classicism) – loose (Romanticism); the periods developed “over the head” of adjacent periods. The similarity of the Renaissance and Classicism vs. Baroque and Romanticism was probably rhythmical homonymy rather than imitation. The article reveals the versification similarity of Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Shelley's *The Cenci*. The similarity of versification added to the noticed earlier similarity of motifs, phraseology and vocabulary.

Keywords: meter, rhythm, syntax, stress, Shakespeare, Shelley, Renaissance, Baroque, Classicism, Romanticism

1. The similarities between *Macbeth* and *The Cenci*

The similarities between *Macbeth* (1605–1606) and *The Cenci* (1819) have been variously noted and catalogued (e. g., Harrington-Lueker 1983, particularly footnote 1 for bibliography). Shelley's “appropriations” from Shakespeare were even considered plagiarisms, though the similarities between the two plays could have been conscious borrowings and allusions, or merely language clichés (Akimova 2017). The recorded similarities concerned analogous situations, and even lexicon and phraseology. Here is one example: the scenes of a banquet in *Macbeth* and in *The Cenci*. At the banquet Macbeth sees the ghost of murdered Banquo that nobody else can see; he is distraught (“Avaunt! and quit my sight!”), and Lady Macbeth comforts the guests:

“Think of this, good peers,
But as a thing of custom: 'tis no other,
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time”
(*Macbeth*, 3.4.95–97)

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In *The Cenci* at the banquet celebrating Count Cenci's unnatural joy at his sons' death, the count apologizes to the guests for his daughter's agonizing outburst:

"My friends, I do lament this insane girl
Has spoilt the mirth of our festivity"
 (*The Cenci* 1.3.160–161)

Before murdering Duncan Macbeth hesitates at killing the sleeping king who "hath honoured me of late" (*Macbeth*, 1.7.32); Lady Macbeth also balks at killing the sleeping old man: "Had he not resembled My father as he slept, I had don't" (*Macbeth*, 2.2.12–13). Instead, she urges her husband on:

"When you durst do it, then you are a man."
 "But screw your courage to the sticking place,
 And we'll not fail"
 (*Macbeth*, 2.1.49, 60–61)

In *The Cenci* Olimpio and Marzio also balk at murdering "an old and sleeping man", and Beatrice forces them on:

"Miserable slaves!
 Where if ye dare not kill a sleeping man,
 Found ye the boldness to return to me
 With such a deed undone?" ...
 "Take it! [the weapon] Depart! Return!"
 (*The Cenci*, 4.3.22–25, 36)

Both in *Macbeth* and *The Cenci* personages wish for the murdered victim to revive; Macbeth wishes that Duncan may be awakened: "Wake Duncan with thy knocking! I wish thou could!" (*Macbeth*, 2.2.74), and in *The Cenci* Lucretia moans: "Would that he might yet live!" (*The Cenci*, 4.4.26).

One more recurring motif is that of steps on the stones or the pavement leading to the sleeping victim:

"... Thou sure and firm-set earth,
Hear not my steps, which way they walk for fear
 The very stones prate of my whereabouts,
 And take the present horror of the time,
 Which now suits with it..."
 (*Macbeth*, 2.1.56–60)

“O thou most silent air that shalt not hear
 What now I think! Thou pavement which I tread
 Toward her chamber – let our echoes talk
 Of my imperious step, scorning surprise,
 But not of my intent...”
 (*The Cenci*, 1.1.140–144)

The two excerpts deal with similar motifs and contain identical words, their synonyms, words belonging to the same semantic field, and even phraseology: “steps – step, prate – talk, pavement – stones, tread (the pavement) – walk, earth – air”; “they walk” – “I tread”, “hear not” – “not hear”.

The similarities in phraseology are not necessarily in the same excerpt: “I go, and it is done”; “Had he not resembled My father as he slept, I had done’t”; “I have done the deed” (*Macbeth*, 2.1.62, 2.2.12–14) – “It must be done, it shall be done” (*The Cenci*, 1.3.178). In *Macbeth* the doctor concludes: “Unnatural deeds Do breed unnatural troubles” (*Macbeth*, 5.1.71–72); in *The Cenci* Savella muses: “Strange thoughts beget strange deeds” (*The Cenci*, 4.4.139).

In later Shakespeare’s plays and in Shelley’s *The Cenci* we find similar rhetorical figures: “Never, never, never, never, never” (*King Lear*, 5.4.308), “horror! horror! horror!” (*Macbeth*, 2.3.66), and “Murder! Murder! Murder!” (*The Cenci*, 4.4.52). cf. Middleton’s *A Game at Chess* (1625) where the same figure is used humorously, in a discussion of the price for the indulgence from various sins, for example, from murder: “Killing, killing, killing, killing, killing” (Middleton, *A Game at Chess*, 4.2.90).

2. Aims of the article

We are going to look for (1) the similarities of versification in Shelley’s tragedy *The Cenci* and Shakespeare’s tragedy *Macbeth*. We shall also (2) follow the evolution of the iambic pentameter during the 260 years of English dramaturgy (1561 to 1821), from Norton and Sackville’s *Gorboduc* to Byron’s *The Two Foscari*. Comparing actual iambic pentameter with the speech model of verse we shall check (3) which periods of versification followed the traits of English speech (represented by Dickens’s prose), and which periods deviated from these traits; in other words, which periods cultivated the “verse-prose” opposition and which periods eschewed it.

3. Strict and loose iambic pentameter: preliminary remarks. Material analyzed

The form of Early New English iambic pentameter evolved remarkably quickly: during the eighty years of Renaissance drama (1561–1642) the form changed from *strict* in early Elizabethan plays to *loose* during the period of Baroque, the epoch of King James I. In 1642 Cromwell's edict closed all theaters, and the jobless playwrights and actors died in poverty. After the restoration of monarchy in 1660 Charles II gave licenses to two theater companies, and the new authors began to compose plays for the newly opened theaters. The plays were again created in the form of iambic pentameter. The versification gradually changed again, back to a stricter form, and became even more strict during the period of John Dryden (1631–1700) and the 18th century Classicism. The versification of Romanticism, 19th century, while retaining a strict syllabic count, introduced various accentual deviations not used in the previous epochs (see below). The versification of Romanticism, compared to Classicism, is loose.

How do we define stricter and looser iambic pentameter? The most important parameters are:

- the syllabic composition of lines;
- the placement of stresses within the line;
- the types and number of accentual deviations from the iambic scheme;
- the placement of syntactic breaks within the line;
- the correlation between syntactic and accentual types of lines;
- the structure of line endings: their syllabic, accentual and syntactic features.

We shall discover how the versification of *Macbeth* and *The Cenci* correlate. We shall also see how these two plays relate to other plays of different epochs. I studied the dramatic iambic pentameter of various epochs. The periods and plays studied were as follows:

Elizabethan Renaissance, second half of the 16th c. Norton and Sackville, *King Gorboduc*, 1561, Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy*, 1586–1587 and Shakespeare's *Richard III*, 1592–1593.

Jacobean Baroque, first quarter of the 17th c.: Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 1605–1606 and *The Tempest*, 1610–1611, Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, 1612–1613, and Massinger, *The Maid of Honour*, 1621–1623.

Classicism, 18th c.: Addison, *Cato*, 1712, Theobald, *The Persian Princess*, 1708, *Orestes*, 1731 and *The Fatal Secret*, 1733, the refurbished Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*; cf. Pope, *Epistles*.

Romanticism, first half of the 19th c.: Shelley, *The Cenci* (1819) and *Charles the First* (1822), and Byron, *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari* (1821).

4. The speech model of verse

We compare the versification of various periods with the *speech model of verse*. The speech model of verse is a “text” consisting of “verse lines” that occur in prose fortuitously, by accident, but that could have occurred in actual iambic pentameter verse. The speech model was constructed from Dickens’s novel *David Copperfield*. The 487 “lines” of the model were selected, as much as possible, from the end of a syntactic period. Here are some examples of the “lines”:

“to leave her with the Doctor and her mother”
 “was mortally affronted by his marriage”
 “My father’s eyes had closed upon the light”
 “and how, from India tidings of his death”
 “Bolted and locked against it. My poor mother”

5. Parameters of versification

The main parameters of versification considered in this article are (a) the placement of strong syntactic breaks after syllables 2–11; (b) the distribution of stresses on even syllables 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 (Tables 1, 2); (c) “rhythmical figures” (strings of accentual deviations from the iambic scheme) and their link with semantics; (d) the types of line endings; and (e) syllabic composition of lines (Baroque only). The strings of stresses on syllables 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and on 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 represent the stress profile of the text. All the chosen plays are composed in iambic pentameter. The meter of iambic pentameter can be delineated as a string of syllabic positions, strong (S) and weak (W): WSWSWSWSWS (W). S positions are filled with predominantly stressed syllables, and W positions – with predominantly unstressed syllables. Both S and W allow occasional deviations from the scheme: S positions allow occasional unstressed syllables, and W positions tolerate occasional stresses. Omitted stresses on positions 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 are particularly relevant. Their distribution follows the traits of the English speech, the rules of the iambic meter, the prevalent stress profile of the epoch, and the style of the individual poet. The minimum of midline stresses (the “dip” on the diagram) usually falls either on syllable 6, or 8; the placement of the dip depends on the prevalent syntactic structure of the lines and the chronology of the play (see below).

The maximum consecutive deviations on adjacent syllables are usually two, on positions WS or SW, sometimes three, on positions WSW, and practically never on SWS; the latter rhythmical figure occurs in the particularly loose

variants of iambic pentameter, such as the 17th century later Baroque (e. g., Philip Massinger's versification style). Examples of rhythmical figures WS and SW: "Stabbed by the selfsame hand that made these wounds"; "In thy foul throat thou liest (Shakespeare, *Richard III*, 1.2.10, 93); WSW: "Still it cried 'Sleep no more!' to all the house" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 2.2.41), and SWS: "Here will I be feasting! At least for a month" (Massinger, *A New Way to Pay Old Debts*, 5.1.255) "Here will" occupy the same syllabic position, one. One more possible interpretation: "I be" occupy syllabic position 3.

6. Analyses

6.1. Strong syntactic breaks

We differentiate three degrees of syntactic cohesion between adjacent content words with their clitics. The closest link marked [/] occurs between the components of an attributive phrase, a verb and its object, or members of a compound nominal or verbal predicate. The medium link marked [//] occurs between a subject and a predicate, a verb and its adverbial modifiers, or between two adjacent metrical words¹ that have no immediate syntactic link. The weakest link, that is, the strongest break, marked [///], occurs between two sentences, the main sentence and a subordinate clause, between the author's and direct speech, and between expanded homogeneous sentence elements, e. g. "...go carry them, /// and smear [t]he sleepy grooms with blood" (Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 2.2.49–50). The sign [→] denotes enjambments. Here is how we mark the texts:

"We dare not / kill // an old // and sleeping / man."
 "We strangled / him /// that there // might be / no blood"
 "It was the mantle /// which // my grandfather // →
 Wore // in his high / prosperity, /// and men // →
 Envied / his state; /// so may they / envy / thine."
 (Shelley, *The Cenci*, 4.3.10, 45, 51–53)

Enjambments are created by the disruption of strong and medium links. Both enjambments in the examples above break a medium link. In Byron's plays enjambments particularly often break a close link:

¹ A metrical word is a lexical word with a stress on S or a clitic group arranged around a stress on S (see Gasparov 1974: 169–170). Monosyllables with a secondary stress on W and disyllabic words creating inversions of stress are pulled into the metrical word.

But he avow'd / the letter // to the Duke / →
 Of Milan, /// and his suffering // half / atone for / →
 Such weakness. /// We shall see. /// You, Loredano, ///
 (Byron, *The Two Foscari*, 1.1.15–17)

Let us look at strong breaks calculated as percent from the total number of lines.

Table 1. Strong syntactic breaks after syllables 2–11

Plays	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Run- ons
Norton, <i>Gorboduc</i> , Acts 1–3, 1561	9.4	2.3	<u>22.6</u>	5.1	7.3	1.3	2.4	0.6	75.4	0.1	24.5
Kyd, <i>The Spanish Tragedy</i> , 1586–1587	11.9	4.4	<u>22.7</u>	9.3	6.9	2.6	1.7	0.7	89.2	1.3	9.5
Shakespeare, <i>Richard III</i> , 1592–1593	12.6	4.4	<u>19.6</u>	11.3	13.1	4.5	2.2	0.8	70.9	17.3	11.8
Shakespeare, <i>Othello</i> , 1603–1604	9.3	4.5	<u>20.8</u>	15.3	<u>21.0</u>	11.7	7.3	2.2	60.5	23.1	16.3
Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i>, 1605–1606	6.1	2.8	15.3	12.6	<u>29.6</u>	13.0	10.6	2.6	53.1	18.6	28.3
Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i> , 1610–1611	7.2	2.7	17.9	15.8	<u>30.0</u>	17.7	13.2	8.1	35.9	22.1	42.0
Webster, <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>, 1612	7.0	5.2	12.8	<u>17.2</u>	<u>19.7</u>	<u>22.2</u>	7.9	2.9	43.8	26.5	30.0
Theobald, <i>Orestes</i> , 1731	11.0	3.6	<u>22.6</u>	9.4	18.2	2.9	2.9	1.9	60.2	27.2	12.6
Theobald, <i>The Fatal Secret</i> , 1733	3.2	3.7	<u>20.5</u>	11.1	<u>27.3</u>	10.5	9.0	1.8	40.7	35.4	23.9
Shelley, <i>The Cenci</i>, 1819	11.9	6.8	<u>22.5</u>	9.0	<u>19.2</u>	8.4	10.3	2.1	60.5	9.1	28.2

Plays	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	Run- ons
Shelley, <i>Charles The First</i> , 1821	5.4	7.6	13.3	10.0	18.7	8.2	7.8	1.2	77.1	22.5	17.4
Byron, <i>Sardana- palus</i> , 1821	11.3	6.7	15.6	15.2	16.9	14.6	13.5	5.5	36.4	38.6	35.5
Byron, <i>The Two Foscari</i> , 1821	12.2	7.9	15.4	14.5	18.0	16.0	16.0	10.3	34.0	22.7	43.2
Model	10.7	4.7	13.0	7.7	13.0	9.0	9.4	2.3	54.9	35.7	9.1

In the speech model of verse the highest numbers of breaks occur after syllables 4 and 6, though, in comparison with actual verse, the numbers in the model are low and equivalent: only 12.9 and 13.0% of all “lines”. In the Renaissance plays (Norton and Sackville, Kyd, early Shakespeare) the most frequent break fell after syllable 4, the end of the first hemistich. This tendency followed the structure of the French decasyllable. Shakespeare’s *Richard III* was composed 30 years after Norton and Sackville’s *Gorboduc* and seven years after Kyd’s *Spanish Tragedy*; in Shakespeare’s play the percent of breaks after the fourth syllable (19.6%) is lower than in Norton’s Acts 1–3 and in Kyd’s tragedy (22.6 and 22.7%). There are more breaks after syllables 5 and 6 in *Richard III* (11.3 and 13.1%) than in Kyd’s *The Spanish Tragedy* (only 9.3 and 6.9%): in later Elizabethan plays the breaks are scattered more freely along the line. In Shakespeare’s post-1600 Jacobean plays *Macbeth* (1605–1606) and *The Tempest* (1610–1611) the place of the most prominent break had moved closer to the end of the line to fall after syllable 6, while *Othello* has a transitional distribution of syntactic breaks: the percent of breaks after syllables 4 and 6 is almost equal. In Webster’s Baroque play *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–1613) and Massinger’s later Baroque tragi-comedy *The Maid of Honour* (1625) the most frequent break falls after syllable 7 (22.2% of all lines in *The Duchess of Malfi* and 25.2% in *The Maid of Honour*); there are numerous breaks also after syllables 4, 5 and 6. Webster’s and particularly Massinger’s line does not have an obvious hemistich segmentation; it is syntactically more amorphous than late Shakespeare’s (cf. Byron’s plays).

Theobald’s plays belong to the period of Classicism, the 18th century. The most frequent syntactic break moved back closer to the beginning of the line: now it falls after syllable 4 (*Orestes*). In *The Fatal Secret* there are two places of frequent breaks, the major break falls after syllable 6 (27.3%) and a less

prominent one occurs after syllable 4 (20.5%). *The Fatal Secret* is based on Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*; this may explain the place of the most prominent break after syllable 6, while the less prominent break, as in other poetical works of Classicism, falls after syllable 4. Thus, Classicism does not follow the traits of the preceding period (Baroque), but seems to imitate the period before Baroque: the later Renaissance. Classicism, as it were, goes "over the head" of the preceding period. Such a trend has been recorded in other poetic traditions (Gasparov 1984). However, the versification of Classicism might be merely homonymous to that of the later Renaissance: similar metrical restrictions cause a similar line structure.

In Byron's plays, *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari* there is absolutely no hemistich segmentation; for example, in *Sardanapalus* the number of syntactic breaks after syllables 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 is 15.6, 16.2, 16.9, 14.6, 13.5%; in *The Two Foscari* the percent of breaks after the same syllables is 15.4, 14.5, 18.0, 16.0, 16.0%.

What about Shelley's dramas? Unlike Byron's plays, the two dramas show dissimilar tendencies. *Charles The First* has the highest number of breaks only after syllable 6 (and not too many: 18.7%, cf. with Byron's *The Two Foscari*), while *The Cenci* shows a different trait: the highest number of breaks appears after syllables 4 (22.5%) and 6 (19.2%); this is not unlike a transition from the earlier to the later Shakespeare, something like *Henry V*, *Julius Caesar* or *Othello*; the latter both I and Douglas Bruster attribute to an earlier date than the years traditionally assumed (Tarlinskaja 2014, Appendix B; Bruster 2015; Bruster, Smith 2016; cf. Taylor, Egan 2017). I tentatively date *Othello* 1601–1602 instead of the traditional 1603–1604. Syntactic breaks after syllables 4 and 6 must have been Shelley's idea of Shakespeare's versification, particularly in the great tragedies: this is how Shelley "heard" Shakespeare's iambic pentameter and imitated it in *The Cenci*. The distribution of breaks in *The Cenci* does not quite follow *Macbeth*, where a maximum of breaks occurs only after syllable 6 (29.6%). The location of the most frequent syntactic breaks in *The Cenci* tentatively follows the pattern of *Othello*.

Thus, the maximum of syntactic breaks falls after syllable 4 in the Renaissance plays, after syllable 6 in the post-1600 Baroque, and even after syllable 7 in the verse of some Baroque playwrights, such as Webster, Massinger and Middleton. Examples:

"Alas, poor duke! /4/ the task he undertakes
Is numb'ring sands, /4/ and drinking oceans dry"
(Shakespeare, *King Richard II*, 2.2.147–148)

“The wood began to move. /6/ – Liar and slave! –
Let me endure your wrath, /6/ if ‘t be not so”
(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 5.4.35–36)

“Yet strive not to come near ‘em. /7/ This will gain
Access to private lodgings, /7/ where yourself”
(Webster, *The Duchess of Malfi*, 1.2.221–222)

Here is an excerpt from *The Cenci*:

“And when a deed /4/ where mercy insults Heaven.
Why do I talk? /4/ Hadst thou a tongue to say
But never dream /4/ ye shall outlive him long!
Stop, for God’s sake! /4/ I will go back and kill him.
Give me the weapon, /5/ we must do thy will.
Take it! /2/ Depart! /4/ Return! /6/ How pale thou art.
We do but that /4/ which ‘twere a deadly crime
To leave undone. /4/ Would it were done! /8/ Even
whilst

That doubt is passing through your mind, /8/ the world
Is conscious of a change. /6/ Darkness and hell..”
(Shelley, *The Cenci*, 4.3.30–40)

Most breaks fall after syllable 4. Below is a longer excerpt from *Macbeth*:

“They must lie there: /4/ go carry them, /8/ and smear
The sleeping grooms with blood. /6/ – I’ll go no more:
I am afraid to think /6/ what I have done;
Look on’t again I dare not. /7/ – Infirm of purpose!
Give me the daggers: /5/ the sleeping and the dead
Are but as pictures: /5/ ‘tis the eye of childhood
That fears a painted devil. /6/ If he do bleed,
I’ll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
For it must seen their guilt. /6/ Whence is that knocking?”
(Shakespeare, *Macbeth*, 2.2.49–57)

The noun “devil” is monosyllabic. Most breaks in the excerpt fall after syllable 6.

In the plays of Romantism the syntactic structure of lines eschewes their hemistich segmentation. In the speech model of verse most breaks fall after

syllables 4 and 6, and both are low: only 12.9 and 13%, cf. *Othello*, *The Fatal Secret*, and *The Cenci*. But the breaks in *Othello* occur almost two times more often than in the speech model of verse: 20.8 and 21.0% vs. 12.9 and 13%. The verse amplifies the speech tendency.

In Shakespeare's plays the word boundaries after syllable 4 are mostly below 50% of lines; exceptions are 2 *Henry VI*, 3 *Henry VI*, *Love's Labour's Lost*, and *Romeo and Juliet*. The earlier works, such as *King Gorboduc*, both co-authors, *Jocasta*, also both co-authors, and *The Misfortunes of Arthur* place word boundaries after syllable 4 in up to 78.5% of the lines. This means that the earlier works sport a caesura after syllable 4, but not Shakespeare's plays.

6.2. Distribution of stresses on syllables

The three earlier plays, Norton and Sackville's *King Gorboduc*, Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* and Shakespeare's *Richard III* have a minimum of stresses (a "dip" in the diagrams) on syllable 6, while stressing on syllable 4 is high: the syntactic structure of Renaissance iambic pentameter usually divides the line into 4 + 6 syllables, thus the frequent stressing on syllable 4 supports the syntactic end of the first hemistich. A new phrase begins with syllable 5: English phrases often begin with one or more unstressed grammatical words, e. g.: "and rock me | to the sleep", "and was the first | to call", "at the impiety", and so on. Consequently, a syntactic seam after syllable 4 causes a stressing dip on syllable 6: English syntax and phrasal accentuation are interrelated.

Figure 1 shows the stress profiles of constrained and loose iambic pentameter.

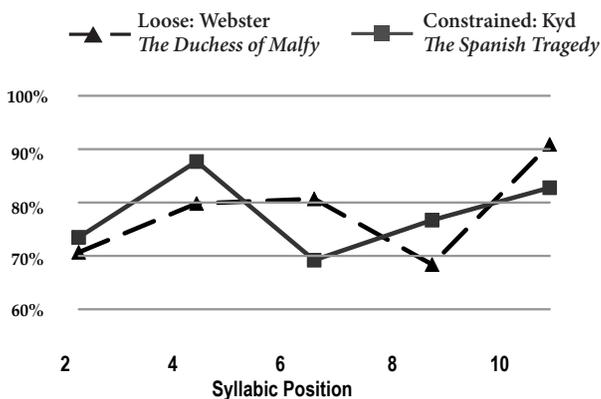


Figure 1. Stressing on S in the constrained (Renaissance) and loose (Baroque) iambic pentameter (in % of all lines)

The loose iambic pentameter is close to the speech model of verse (see Table 2).

Table 2. Stressing on S syllables (in % from all lines)

Plays	2	4	6	8	10
Norton, <i>Gorboduc</i> , Acts 1–3, 1561	75.8	<u>90.5</u>	68.3	84.6	94.3
Kyd, <i>The Spanish Tragedy</i> , 1586–1587	73.5	87.7	<u>69.2</u>	76.7	82.8
Shakespeare, <i>Richard III</i> , 1592–1593	64.7	84.2	68.7	75.3	89.9
Shakespeare, <i>Macbeth</i>, 1605–1606	65.0	81.8	76.8	69.6	94.5
Shakespeare, <i>The Tempest</i> , 1610–1611	67.9	80.1	77.7	70.4	87.6
Webster, <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> , 1612	70.7	<u>79.8</u>	<u>80.7</u>	68.4	90.9
Addison, <i>Cato</i> , 1712	72.5	<u>89.3</u>	70.1	78.8	97.9
Theobald, <i>Orestes</i> , 1731	78.4	<u>89.4</u>	72.4	84.2	99.1
Theobald, <i>The Fatal Secret</i> , 1733	78.6	<u>88.4</u>	73.5	82.8	99.0
Shelley, <i>The Cenci</i>, 1819	64.4	<u>82.8</u>	77.3	71.8	90.0
Shelley, <i>Charles The First</i> , 1821	75.3	84.1	<u>76.1</u>	<u>75.5</u>	88.1
Byron, <i>Sardanapalus</i> , 1821	71.9	78.4	<u>73.0</u>	<u>72.5</u>	90.5
Byron, <i>The Two Foscari</i> , 1821	72.4	76.9	<u>73.7</u>	<u>72.6</u>	86.3
Model	69.4	76.8	76.8	62.5	93.4

The same stress profile, with a dip on syllable 6, recurs in the verse of 18th c. Classicism; e. g., Addison's *Cato*, Theobald's *Orestes* and *The Fatal Secret* (Figures 2 and 3). The versification of Baroque differs from Renaissance: the stressing dip has moved to syllable 8, as in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*. In Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi* and in Massinger's *The Maid of Honour* the major syntactic seam falls after syllable 7, the stressing dip occurs on syllable 8, while the stressing on syllables 4 and 6 is equal, and low (cf. with the speech model).

Theobald's *The Fatal Secret* is completely unlike its original *The Duchess of Malfi*: the stressing of syllable 4 is high, marking the end of the first hemistich, and the midline stressing dip falls on syllable 6, the way it does in other iambic pentameter texts during the period of Classicism. Norton's portion of *Gorboduc* (Acts 1–3) and Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* also had a prominent stress on syllable 4 and a dip on syllable 6. Stressing on syllable 2 in Shakespeare's plays and *The Cenci* is low: the beginning of the line is also the beginning of a phrase. In *Richard III* the stressing on syllable 2 is only 64.7%, in *Macbeth* 65%, in *The Cenci* it is 64.4%. The dip in midline falls on syllable 6 in the Elizabethan dramas and in those of Classicism, while in the Baroque plays

and in the model the dip moves to syllable 8: the Elizabethan plays and those of Classicism oppose their verse structure to the speech (prose) tendencies, while the Baroque plays follow the tendencies of speech (prose). In the speech model of verse the “dip” on syllable 8 is mostly created by two rhythmical types of lines, $xXxXxXxxxXx$ (“She found the latter standing at the window”) and $xXxxxXxxxXx$ (“She thinks I am too thoughtless and too pretty”). The underlined x stands for an ictic syllable with an omitted metrical stress. The rhythmical line type $xXxxxXxxxX$ used to be typical of John Ford (Tarlinskaja 2014). Classicism went back to the rhythm of Renaissance “over the head” of Baroque. This could have been a conscious imitation of the early New English iambic pentameter, or a subconscious use of the syntactic and accentual pattern 4 + 6 syllables, with a syntactic seam after syllable 4 (or after syllable 5, a feminine ending of the first hemistich). In that case the rhythmical form of the 18th c. iambic pentameter is homonymous to the 16th c. verse form.

Figure 2 shows the difference between Webster’s Baroque play *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612) and its rendering *The Fatal Secret* (1736) by Lewis Theobald during 18th c. Classicism.

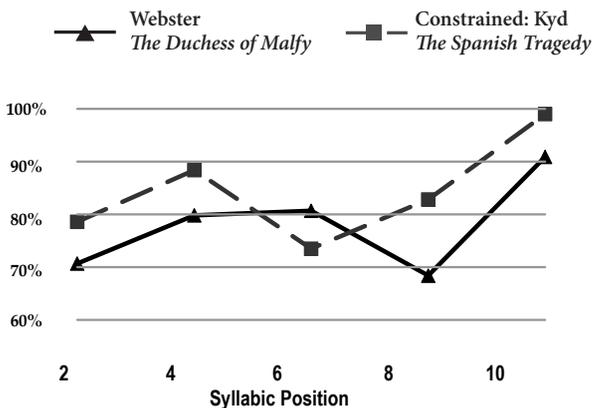


Fig. 2. Stressing on S in Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (1612–13) and its adaptation by Lewis Theobald, *The Fatal Secret* (1736)

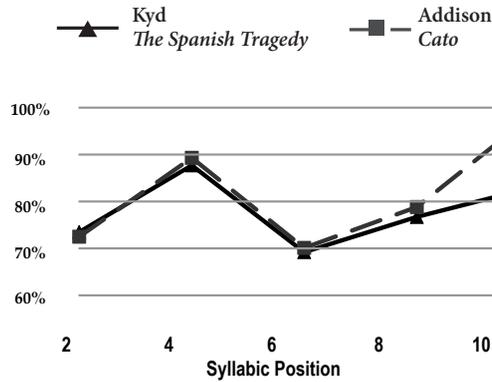


Fig. 3. Stressing on S in Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy* (1586–87) and Addison's *Cato* (1712)

The stressing pattern of *The Fatal Secret* is not unlike Elizabethan plays with a dip on syllable 6, and completely different from *The Duchess of Malfi*, with its dip on syllable 8 and an equal stressing on syllables 4 and 6 (and most breaks after syllable 7):

Table 3. Stressing on S syllables (in % from all lines)

Plays	2	4	6	8	10
<i>The Duchess of Malfi</i>	70.7	<u>79.8</u>	<u>80.7</u>	68.4	90.9
<i>The Fatal Secret</i>	78.6	88.4	73.5	82.8	99.0
<i>The Spanish Tragedy</i>	73.5	87.7	69.2	76.7	82.8
<i>The Maid of Honour</i>	<u>73.8</u>	<u>75.9</u>	<u>76.4</u>	63.9	90.1
<i>The Two Foscari</i>	<u>72.4</u>	<u>76.9</u>	<u>73.7</u>	<u>72.6</u>	86.3
Speech model	69.4	<u>76.8</u>	<u>76.8</u>	64.3	93.4

The stressing of *The Duchess of Malfi* is very close to the speech model. In *The Maid of Honour* stresses on syllables 2, 4, 6 are almost equal, and close to the indices of Byron's tragedies. The difference between *The Fatal Secret* and *The Spanish Tragedy* is in the number of stresses on syllable 8 (higher in *The Fatal Secret*) and 10: there are almost no omitted stresses on syllable 10 in *The Fatal Secret*, while they are numerous in *Gorboduc* and *The Spanish Tragedy*. Norton and Kyd relatively often end their lines with polysyllabic words such as "insolence", "flattery", "delightfulness" with the final syllable unstressed. The final syllable was considered stressed by Борис Томашевский in his "Пятистопный ямб Пушкина", 1919. This interpretation is contrary to the Early New English phonology. In the oral rendition the heavy suffixes

might have carried a secondary stress; I, however, considered them unstressed. Theobald's syllable 10 is almost always stressed. The stressing similarity between *The Fatal Secret* and *The Spanish Tragedy*, as suggested above, might be either a conscious imitation, or, more likely, a relationship of metrical homonymy.

In Byron's tragedies, the period of Romanticism, there is no syntactic hemistich segmentation (Table 1), consequently, the stressing on syllables 2, 4, 6, 8 is almost equal (Table 2); here is the stressing pattern in *The Maid of Honour* and *The Two Foscari*:

Table 4. Stressing on S syllables (in % from all lines)

Plays	2	4	6	8	10
<i>The Maid of Honour</i>	73.8	75.9	76.4	63.9	90.1
<i>The Two Foscari</i>	72.4	76.9	73.7	72.6	86.3

Except for syllable 8, containing the stressing dip in the *Maid of Honour* but not in *The Two Foscari*, the stressing patterns in the two plays are close. Again, we are probably facing metrical homonymy of the two periods rather than imitation: it is unlikely that Byron imitated Massinger. The similarity occurs "over the head" of Classicism.

In Shelley's *Charles The First* the stressing on syllables 6 and 8 is almost equal, thus there is no dip on syllable 8 (cf. *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari*), while in *The Cenci*, similarly to *Macbeth*, there is a dip on syllable 8. Here are the stressing patterns in *Macbeth*, *The Cenci*, *Charles The First*, *Sardanapalus*, and the speech model:

Table 5. Stressing on S syllables (in % from all lines)

Plays	2	4	6	8	10
<i>Macbeth</i>	65.0	81.8	76.8	69.6	94.5
<i>The Cenci</i> :	67.2	82.0	76.2	69.9	91.7
<i>Charles The First</i>	75.3	84.1	<u>76.1</u>	<u>75.2</u>	88.1
<i>Sardanapalus</i>	71.9	78.4	<u>73.0</u>	<u>72.5</u>	90.5
Speech model	69.4	<u>76.8</u>	<u>76.8</u>	64.3	93.4

Stressing of *The Cenci* is impressively close to *Macbeth*, while *Charles The First* is different from *The Cenci* and not unlike Byron's *Sardanapalus*: stresses on midline syllables 6 and 8 are equal (Figure 4). In the speech model of verse the stressing on syllables 4 and 6 is equal: there is no "hemistich" segmentation in

the speech model, while in *Macbeth*, *The Cenci* and *Charles The First* the high stressing on syllable 4 suggests a hemistich segmentation. A tendency close to the speech model occurs in Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*, in Massinger's *The Maid of Honour* and in Byron's tragedies. Moreover, Massinger sometimes used heavy feminine endings (5.5% of all lines) coupled with enjambments. No wonder Ants Oras accused Massinger of composing prose-like verse (Oras 1960). Stressing and places of syntactic breaks in Byron's tragedies are also prose-like, but in a different way from Massinger's plays. The strict syllabic composition of *Sardanapalus* and *The Two Foscari* compensates for their prose-like stressing and the numerous enjambments (see below).

The last ictus in *Macbeth* and *The Cenci*, syllable 10, is frequently stressing. This mode of stressing in *Macbeth* is explained by the chronological place of the tragedy in Shakespeare's oeuvre: there are already few polysyllables at the end of the line, such as "envious", "perjuries", "faithfully" (all from *Romeo and Juliet*), and still no unstressed monosyllables on syllable 10, such as prepositions "in", "for" and "by" and conjunctions "and", "but" and "that" (all from *The Tempest*). These will appear in later plays, beginning with *Antony and Cleopatra* (Tarlinskaja 2014, Appendix B). And in *The Cenci* Shelley impressively closely replicated the stressing pattern of *Macbeth*.

The actual verse of Baroque and of the Romantic *The Cenci* imitating the Baroque *Macbeth* has, like the speech model of verse, a dip on syllable 8: frequent stressing on syllable 10 causes, by contrast, a dip on syllable 8.

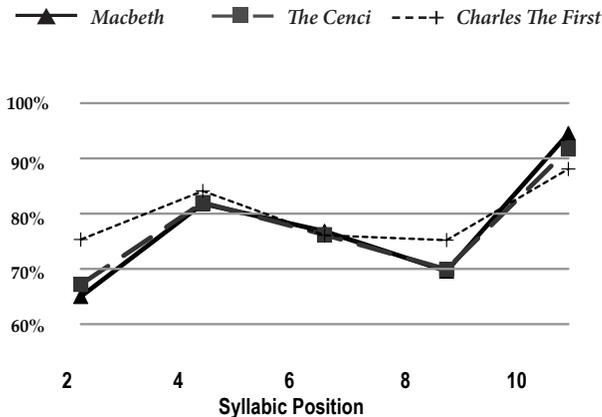


Fig. 4. Stressing on S in Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and Shelley's *The Cenci* and *Charles The First*

6.3. Rhythmical deviations and meaning

The accentual pattern of the Romantic tragedies is bolder than in the earlier plays. While retaining a strict syllabic count, Shelley introduced various rhythmical deviations not used in the previous epochs (see Tarlinskaja 1976, 1987). In *The Cenci* there are numerous cases of a disyllabic word creating an inversion of stresses on syllabic positions WS at the end of a syntactic period, e. g.: “If thou hast done murders, /// made thy life’s path...”; “What did he say? – Nothing. /// As soon as we...”; “Who yet remain stubborn. /// – I overrule” (*The Cenci*, 5.2.134, 180, 185). Another type of deviations, also at the end of a phrase, is the use of two monosyllables, an unstressed grammatical word and a stressed content (lexical) word on syllabic positions SW; e. g.: “And holding his breath, /// died. – There remains nothing” (*The Cenci*, 5.2.183). The deviations, such as “Who yet remain stubborn. – I overrule” and “And holding his breath, /// died” are clearly used for emphasis, in the former case, to emphasize the stubborn refusal of the prisoner to speak; in the latter case, to support the effect of suffocation. Such rhythmic-syntactic patterns did not occur in earlier epochs.

The Romantic playwrights had learned from the previous epochs how to use disyllabic and trisyllabic accentual deviations on positions WS, SW and WSW to emphasize meaning (“rhythm and meaning”, see Tarlinskaja 1987, 2014, Appendix A), e. g.:

“Touched the loose wrinkled throat, when the old man”,
 “Stabbed with one blow my everlasting soul”,
 “Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack’s kiss”,
 “And the rack makes him utter, do you think”
 (*The Cenci*, 4.3.17, 5.2.1 123, 8, 96), cf.:

“Weep our sad bosoms empty. – Let us rather”,
 “Pour the sweet milk of concord into hell”,
 “Wiped the black scruples, reconciled my thoughts”
 (*Macbeth*, 4.3.2, 98, 116); cf.:

“Spreads his black Wings, and slowly mounts to Day”,
 “Clapp’d his glad Wings, and sate to view the Fight”²
 “On her heav’d Bosom hung her drooping Head”
 (Pope, *The Rape of the Lock*, 4.88, 5.54, 4.145)

² On formulas in English literary verse see Tarlinskaja 1989 and 2014.

The rare deviations on SWS can also emphasize meaning; e. g.:

“Abroad in colonies, **or fall by** the sword”
(Massinger, *The Maid of Honour*, 1.1.209)

The word “colonies” is considered disyllabic.

7. Alternation of periods

Versification patterns evolve in waves. Texts with a stressing dip on syllable 8 follow the speech tendency, and the “verse-prose” opposition becomes eschewed, while the dip on syllable 6 signifies a retreat from the speech tendency, and the “verse-prose” contrast increases. Iambic pentameter of Renaissance and of Classicism was strict, while that of Baroque and Romanticism was loose. Philip Massinger (1583–1640), for example, in addition to other prose-like features, created many enjambments that combined with feminine and dactylic endings; for example:

“And, when at push of pike I am to ENter→
A breach, to show my valor I have BOUGHT me→
An armor cannon-proof. – You will not HEAP then→
O’er an outwork in your shirt? – I do not like→
Activity that way...”
(Massinger, *The Maid of Honour*, 1.1.59–63)

Lines 59–61 have feminine endings accompanied by enjambments, line 61, in addition, has a heavy feminine ending. In earlier Baroque iambs, such as Fletcher’s, enjambments and feminine endings were mutually exclusive: Fletcher’s feminine endings required a syntactic line boundary (Tarlinskaja 2020). In Massinger plays, accentual deviations from the meter on adjacent syllabic positions SWS were permitted. All these features made Massinger’s dramas sound like prose; see Oras 1960. Obviously, prose-sounding verse was Massinger’s goal. Here are three lines from the tragedy *The Maid of Honour*³:

³ The sign → designates enjambments, underlines are for two syllables filling the same W position, bold letters emphasize accentual deviations, the number in square brackets indicates a missing syllable.

“[1] Pray you, style me as I am, a wretch forsaken →
 Of *the world as* myself. – I would it were →
 In me to help you. – Ay, if that you *want* POWER, *Sir*”
 (Massinger, *The Maid of Honour* 3.1.109–111)

Line 109 has an omitted first syllable (in square brackets). Strings of two syllables (underlined) occupying the same W occur on positions 5 and 7 of lines 109 and 111. Lines 109 and 110 have enjambments, line 109 has a feminine ending and an enjambment; and line 111 has an extra-metrical stress on syllable 9 and a heavy feminine ending. Line 110 contains accentual deviations on positions SWS (2, 3, 4); such lines would be disallowed in Shakespeare's verse.

The period of Baroque was replaced by pre-Classicism (the second half of the 17th century) and Classicism of the 18th c. In 1660 the monarchy was restored. King Charles II who had spent his exile years at Versailles, acquired a taste for gallantry and for theatrical entertainment. The king gave licenses to two theater companies; the director of one of them was William Davenant, an alleged Shakespeare's godson and a mediocre playwright. The tastes of the public were changing; the “gallant” audience expected a more refined style of plays with a happy ending, and smooth versification. Shakespeare's dramas and their versification were now considered barbaric. Different tastes required different plays, and a new generation of playwrights began to create dramas that suited the changed tastes of the public. The post-Restoration playwrights lacked both talent and time: the new theaters required new repertoire, but new plays are not composed in a hurry, so the post-Restoration authors began to alter and rewrite Elizabethan and Baroque plays “for their own good”. Verse was moving towards greater strictness and symmetry that will develop by the end of the 17th c. in Dryden's poetry; Dryden was the forerunner of Classicism. Syntactic breaks in William Davenant's plays began to appear after syllables 4 and 6 equally often, and the stressing dip on position 8 (the verse style of Baroque) began to be replaced by equal stressing of syllables 6 and 8 (cf. with Shakespeare's *Henry V* and *Othello*).

The most noticeable feature of the post-Restoration plays was the smoothing out of the line rhythm: the accentual “deviations” that earlier poets used to emphasize meaning began to be ironed out. What more, the Renaissance figures of speech such as metaphors, became too complicated for the new audience to digest, and were removed. Here is one example. In *Macbeth* Shakespeare is describing the murder of the king. The deed was so heinous that the day became as dark as the night (probably during a solar eclipse):

“...by th’ hour ‘tis day,
And yet dark night strangles the traveling lamp”
(Shakespeare, *Macbeth* 2.4.7)

The verb “strangles” occurs on syllabic positions 5–6, a rhythmical deviation from the meter and a metaphor for “covers”; “the traveling lamp” is a metaphoric nomination of the sun. Here is how Davenant smoothed out and simplified line 7:

“And yet dark night does cover all the skie”
(Davenant, *Macbeth* 2.4.7)

During the time of Classicism (beginning of the 18th century) the concept of what is beautiful had changed and required a return to a stricter verse form and a stronger “verse-prose” contrast. Here are some examples of the post-restoration and early Classicism authors and plays: John Dryden, *All for Love* 1677, Thomas Otway *Venice Preserved* 1682, William Congreve *The Way of the World* 1700, Joseph Addison *Cato* 1713, George Lillo *The London Merchant* 1731. The eighteenth-century poems and plays favored a symmetrical line structure with a syntactic break after syllables 4 (or 5) and a frequent stressing dip in midline, on syllable 6. Here are some random examples from John Dryden’s *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) with syntactic breaks of different strength after syllable 4:

“So, several factions / from this first Ferment,
Work up to Foam, /// and threat the Government.
Some by their Friends, /// more by themselves thought wise
Oppos’d the Pow’r, /// to which they could not rise”
(Dryden, *Absalom and Achitophel*, 140–143)

Rhythmical parallelism of hemistiches often accompanied grammatical parallelism; here are examples from a later poem, *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1734) by the famous Classicist Alexander Pope:

“What walls can guard me, or what Shades can hide?”
“They stop the Chariot, and they board the Barge”
“With honest anguish, and an aking Head”
“He’ll write a *Journal*, or he’ll turn *Divine*”
“A painted Mistress, or a purling Stream”
“True Genius kindles, and fair Fame inspires”

“The trifling Head, or the corrupted Heart”

“The libell'd Person, and the pictur'd Shape”

“By Nature honest, by Experience wise”

(Pope, *An Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot*, 7, 10, 37, 54, 150, 194, 328, 354, 400)

The syllabic count became precise, and remained so all through Romanticism.

In the period of Romanticism iambic pentameter became loose again, but in a different way from Baroque. The line syntax and stressing marked no hemistich segmentation: syntactic breaks were scattered along the line, and the stressing on syllabic position (2), 4, 6, 8 tended to be equal. Romanticism allowed accentual deviations from the iambic scheme not permitted in the previous epochs; and, as we shall see below, Byron's lines allowed numerous enjambments that broke close syntactic links. Thus, typologically similar periods of versification alternated “over the head” of adjacent periods: Early Renaissance and Classicism – Baroque and Romanticism.

8. Line endings

8.1. Run-on lines (enjambments)

Run-on lines were scarce in Renaissance plays (Kyd, *The Spanish Tragedy* 9.5% lines, Shakespeare *Richard III* 11.8%), still scarce in mid-Shakespeare's plays (*Othello* 16.3%), but grew in later Shakespeare (*Macbeth* 28.3, *The Tempest* 42.0% of lines) and during the period of later Baroque (Massinger, *The Maid of Honour*, Act 1, 59.3% of all lines). The number of run-on lines decreased during the epoch of Classicism (Theobald *Orestes* 12.6%), and grew up again in the plays of Romanticism (Byron, *The Two Foscari* 43.2%, cf. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* 42.0%), Shelley *The Cenci* 28.7%, cf. *Macbeth* 28.3%: here too Shelley seems to follow Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. In *The Two Foscari* Byron uses particularly many run-on-on lines, 43.2% (see above). The enjambments in *The Two Foscari* often break a strong syntactic link, with the enjambed lines ending in a grammatical word; this is how the play begins:

“Where is the prisoner? – Reposing from→

The Question. – The hour's past – fix'd yesterday→

For the resumption of his trial. – Let us→

Rejoin our colleagues in the council, and→

Urge his recall. – Nay, let him profit by→

A few brief minutes of his tortured limbs.”

(Byron, *The Two Foscari*, 1.1.1–6)

Five lines out of six have enjambments, one line with an enjambment has a feminine ending, and three lines end in a preposition (“from, by”) or a conjunction (“and”).

8.2. The syllabic structure of line endings

The syllabic structure of line endings had changed too. The Baroque versification had developed numerous feminine endings. Moreover, feminine endings began to accept stresses on syllable 11, as in “You look extREME ill; is it any OLD grief?”⁴ (Fletcher, *Monsieur Thomas*, 2.1.19), see also the examples from Massinger above. Phrases like “OLD grief”, with a stress (probably weakened in declamation) falling after a metrical stress on 10, occur also in midline: in the same line from Fletcher’s *Monsieur Thomas* there is a phrase “extREME ill” with the main phrasal stress on the metrically strong (S) position 4 and an adjacent, probably weakened, stress on the following metrically weak (W) syllabic position 5. Such syncopated phrases are called “enclitic”.

In the speech model of verse feminine endings constitute 39.4% of all “lines”,⁵ Webster’s *The Duchess of Malfi* (35.1%) and particularly Byron’s *Sardanapalus* (38.6%) are close to that index. This is one more feature that brings *The Duchess of Malfi* close to regular speech. *Macbeth* has 25.3% of feminine line endings, and *The Cenci* unexpectedly contains only 9.1%, however, *Charles The First* displays a Shakespearean index close to the time of *Macbeth*: 23.0%. Massinger’s *The Maid of Honour* has particularly many feminine endings: 45.8% of all lines; however, Fletcher had many more: *Bonduca* 66.8%, Fletcher’s portion in *The False One* 80.9% (Tarlinskaja 2014 Appendix, Table B3, Tarlinskaja 2020 Table 3.). Of the four plays of the period of Romanticism, the line endings of Byron’s *Sardanapalus* are particularly close to the speech model: 38.6% of all lines of *Sardanapalus* have feminine endings. *The Two Foscari*, with its numerous enjambments, has fewer feminine endings, only 22.7% of lines: feminine endings and enjambments usually mutually exclude each other (Tarlinskaja 2020), and *The Two Foscari* has many run-on-on lines, 43.2% (see above).

⁴ Stressed syllable on S is capitalized, the enclitic stress on the following W is underlined.

⁵ Recall that I tried to select the model “lines” from the ends of phrases; 39.4% of “feminine” endings is how phrases tended to end.

9. The syllabic structure within the lines

One more feature of Baroque versification is the syllabic structure within the lines: two or even three syllables fitted into one W slot. Performances in enclosed theaters abolished the need for the actors to enunciate every line separately. The tempo of declamation must have changed: the syllabic structure of verse lines lost its strict count. Such clusters of syllables were probably recited quickly (Tarlinskaja 2004), making the verse resemble every-day speech. Here is an example (clusters of syllables are underlined): “Thou hast pressed to the Emperours presence without my warrant” (Fletcher, *The Prophetess*, 3.2.79): two syllables filling the same W slot occur in positions 1, 3, and 7. There are also cases when a syllable is omitted on W and even on S. The omitted syllable sometimes accompanied an action (e. g., kneeling). As we have seen, the “verse-prose” opposition cultivated during Elizabethan times weakened during the period of Baroque, as the playwrights clearly tried to have their verse resemble every-day speech. The tempo of declamation must have quickened. The loose syllabic structure of lines was typical of later Baroque, 1620–1630 (Middleton, Massinger).

10. Conclusion

1. The versification of Shelley's *The Cenci* is very much like later Shakespeare's plays, especially *Macbeth* and *Othello*, cf. the places of syntactic breaks in *Othello* and *The Cenci*, and particularly the stress profiles of *Macbeth* and *The Cenci*. Shelley imitated Shakespeare's *Macbeth* not just in using similar motifs, lexicon and phraseology, but also in the versification: in the place of syntactic breaks, the structure of line endings, and particularly in its stressing pattern.

2. English versification developed in waved: a stricter form, with a syntactic break after syllables 4 or 5 and a stressing “dip” on syllable 6 (Elizabethan Renaissance) – a looser verse during the period of Baroque, with frequent two syllables filling the same W position, a syntactic break after syllable 6, or even 7, and a stressing “dip” on syllable 8 – a strict verse of Classicism, with a syntactic break after syllables 4 (or 5), a syntactic parallelism of hemistiches and a stressing “dip” on syllable 6 – a looser verse of Romanticism, with its syntax and stressing particulars indicating no hemistich segmentation, and with numerous stressing deviations (“rhythmical figures”) used to emphasize meaning. The strict forms of Classicism are either a conscious imitation of Renaissance “over the head” of its immediate predecessor, the Baroque, or

a case of rhythmical homonymy: a hemistich segmentation 4 + 6 syllables, with a syntactic break after syllables 4 or 5 brings to life a stressing dip on syllable 6. The versification of Romanticism, compared to Classicism, is loose; it avoids hemistich segmentation: the syntactic breaks and omitted stresses are often scattered indiscriminately in midline (Byron's plays, Shelley's *Charles The First*). The versification of Shelley's *The Cenci*, very much like Shakespeare's *Macbeth* and *Othello*, is unlike the plays by Byron, as well as Shelley's *Charles The First*. Thus, strict periods of versification were Elizabethan Renaissance and Classicism, while periods of loose verse were Baroque and Romanticism. The similarities of periods "over the head" of adjacent periods lead to homonymous rhythmical structures of iambic pentameter: strict – loose – strict – loose.

3. The speech model of iambic pentameter helped to establish which period plays initiated the norms of the English speech (the periods of Baroque and Romanticism) and which preferred a contrast to the speech norms (Renaissance and Classicism).⁶

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