

Classical Latin Poetry: Some Introductory Notes

(1) Features common to Latin and English poetry

- word-order different than prose
- compression of language
- careful selection of words for literary effect
- sound of words used to express meaning
- frequent use of imagery, metaphor and simile
- balance of lines, with repetition or similar words 'echoing' each other

For example:

Pleasures the Sex, as Children Birds, pursue,
Still out of Reach, but never out of View

(Pope, *Epistle to a Lady*)

*tum pingues agni, et tum mollissima uina,
tum somni dulces, densaeque in montibus umbrae*

'Then fat the lambs, and then most sweet the wine,
then sleep is sweet, and deep on the mountains are the
shadows'

(Virgil, *Georgics* Book I)

(2) Main differences between Latin and English poetry

- Verse in English is formed from a sequence of stressed and unstressed syllables
- Verse in Latin is formed from a sequence of heavy or light syllables
- That is: English poetry is stressed, Latin is quantitative*
- English poetry often rhymes, Latin does not except as a 'special effect'

*n.b. this does not mean that we ignore the natural stress of the words when reading Latin poetry: it is precisely the tension between stress and metre that gives Latin verse its distinctive character.

Historical note: the earliest Latin poetry was, many scholars believe, based on stress accent. This so-called *Saturnian* verse survived into Classical times in the form of religious hymns and incantations (e.g. by the college of Salian priests who each March processed around the city chanting ancient Saturnian verses) but it was entirely replaced by the imported Greek style of quantitative versification. Livius Andronicus (c.284-204 B.C.) and Gnaeus Naevius (c.270-c.199 B.C.) both wrote Saturnian verse, though only fragments survive.

(3) Stress accents in English

Attend all ye who list to hear our noble England's praise;
 I tell of the thrice famous deeds she wrought in ancient days
 When that great fleet invincible against her bore in vain
 The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts of Spain.
(Macaulay, *Armada*)

The lilt or rhythm of these lines is caused by regular alternation of accented and unaccented syllables, in this pattern:

/ / / / / / /
 At-tend all ye who list to hear our no-ble Eng-land's praise

i.e. unaccented-accented, unaccented, accented etc.

or

'di-dum, di-dum, di-dum' etc.

Each 'di-dum' is known as a 'foot'. Any given verse line consists of several such 'feet' arranged in a particular order. The ordering of the feet determines the metre of the verse.

In this case the foot is the same throughout: an *iamb*. In the scansion of Latin verse these are conventionally written ~ - (think 'di-dum'). In English verse we would put the ~ above an unstressed syllable and the - written above a stressed syllable, e.g.

~ - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~ - ~ -
 At-tend all ye who list to hear our no-ble Eng-land's praise

[n.b. remember that in Latin verse the symbols ˘ ˘ mark 'light' and 'heavy' syllable quantities not stress accents.]

Note that the natural stress accents of English words makes them peculiarly well-suited to iambic patterns. For example:

If music be the food of love, play on,
give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
the appetite may sicken and so die

(Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*)

This is the classic *iambic pentameter* of English blank verse. *Iambic* because each foot is a 'di-dum' *iamb*, and *pentameter* because each line consists of a chain of five *iamb*s:

1 2 3 4 5
˘ - ˘ - ˘ - ˘ - ˘ -

If mu- | -sic be | the food | of love | play on

But note that even in English the natural prose stress pattern does not necessarily coincide with the regular rhythm of the verse. Speaking prose we would probably stress this line as: **'If mu-sic be the food of love, play on'**

If we reverse the *iamb* to form 'dum-di' we get another type of foot known as a *trochee*, e.g.

- ˘ - ˘ - ˘ ˘ - ˘ - ˘ ˘ -

Comrades, leave me here a little, while as yet 'tis early morn

(Tennyson, *Locksley Hall*)

Here the stress is on the first syllable of each foot, not the second.

(4) Stress vs. Quantity

The 'beat' (*ictus*) always falls on the stressed syllable in English verse, but in Classical Latin verse this beat falls on the 'heavy' syllable instead. Sometimes natural word-stress coincides with the *ictus* in Latin verse, but often it does not – deliberately so.

Here are the first two lines of a Latin poem written in ‘pure’ iambs:

*Phaselus ille, quem uidetis, hospites
ait fuisse navium celerrimus*

(Catullus IV)

Unusually in this poem the natural word accents coincide with the beats of the iambic metre, i.e.

 / / / / / /
 - - - - - -
Pha-se- | -lus il- | -le, quem | ui-det- | -is, hos- | -pit-es

 / / / / / /
 - - - - - -
a-it | fu-is- | -se na- | -vi-um cel-er- | -ri-mus

But in much Latin poetry this coincidence of stress accent and verse *ictus* is intentionally avoided in several of the feet of each line, so that the verse *ictus* falls on an unstressed syllable in more cases than on a stressed syllable. The reason is that such a coincidence of stress and *ictus* easily results in a monotonous ‘sing-song’ effect that really does begin to sound like ‘di-**dum**, di-**dum**, di-**dum**’ etc.

The effect of separating the *ictus* and the word stress is to produce a relatively even distribution of emphasis throughout, thus a far more subtle rhythm. As we can see from the above examples, this cannot happen in English verse, since the beat of the *ictus* and the stress accent are one and the same thing. This is a very important difference between English and Latin verse.

When stress and accent do coincide, as in *Phaselus ille*, all the weight is concentrated on one syllable of each foot and this makes the metrical rhythm more pronounced. In hexameter lines such an effect is generally only used to provide a characteristic cadence that signals the end of the line. (Rhyme was a later introduction to achieve the same effect: a sense of closure to the line).

(5) Rhetorical Features of Latin Poetry

Many literary features of Latin poetry will be familiar from English poetry – simile, metaphor, antithesis, apostrophe, irony, oxymoron, hyperbole etc. – as these poetical devices were adopted by English poets from Greek and Roman models. Here are a selection of other poetical ‘special effects’:

Alliteration

The recurrence of the same consonant, especially at the beginning of words or syllables (cf. Assonance), e.g.

eripite hanc pestem perniciemque mihi
‘snatch away this plague from me’

(Catullus 76)

Assonance

The recurrence of similar vowel sounds in words close to each other (cf. alliteration), e.g.

litus ut longe resonante Eoa tunditur unda
‘where the beach is pounded by the far-echoing Eastern wave’

(Catullus 11)

Asyndeton

The omission of conjunctions (‘and’, ‘but’ etc.) where these would normally occur in prose, e.g.

clamor, lapides, fustes, gladii
‘shouting, stones, clubs, swords’

(Cicero, *Ad Atticum*)

Chiasmus

A pair of balanced phrases where the order of the second reverses that of the first, e.g.

haec queritur, stupet haec
‘this woman complains, this one gapes’

(Ovid, *Ars Amatoria*)

Enallage (transferred epithet)

Transferring an adjective from the word to which it properly applies to another word in the same phrase, e.g.

Latonae tacitum pertemptant gaudia pectus
'joy thrills the silent heart of Latona'

(Virgil, *Aeneid*)

Enjambement

Running a sentence over the end of a line of verse so that the final word begins the next line, lending emphasis to that word, e.g.

sola domo maeret uacua statisque relictis
incubat ...

'she grieves alone in her house and on the couch he has left / she lies down'

(Virgil, *Aeneid*)

Golden / Silver Lines

A line containing two adjectives and two nouns in agreement with a verb in between in the pattern adj1 adj2 verb noun1 noun2, e.g.

impiaque aeternam tiumerunt saecula noctem
adj1 adj2 verb noun1 noun2

'and the unholy ages feared the everlasting night'

(Virgil, *Aeneid*)

A Silver Line has the pattern: adj1 adj2 verb noun2 noun1

Hendiadys

A single idea expressed using two nouns usually joined by et, e.g.

Pateris libamus et auro

literally: 'we pour from bowls and gold' = 'we pour from golden bowls' (Virgil, *Georgics* 2)

Hyperbaton

The arbitrary dislocation of normal word order, displacing one part of a clause into the middle of another, e.g.

*tussim,
non immerenti quam mihi meus uenter,
dum sumptuosas appeto, dedit, cenas*
literally: 'a cough, which not undeserving to me my
stomach, while I hankered after lavish, gave, dinners'
(Catullus 44)

Metonymy

An expression in which a person or thing takes the name of something with which they are associated, e.g.

cedant arma togae
'let arms give way to the toga' = 'let war give way to peace'
(Cicero, *Poems*)

Onomatopoeia

Words or combinations of words, the sound of which suggests the sense, e.g.

at tuba terribili sonitu taratantara dixit
'but the trumpet with a fearful sound said tarantara'
(Ennius, *Annales*)

Pleonasm

The use of unnecessary words, e.g.

sic ore locuta est
'thus she spoke from her mouth'
(Virgil, *Aeneid*)

Syllepsis

The use of the same verb for two different meanings: one literal, one metaphorical, e.g.

deposito pariter cum ueste timore
'my fear put aside together with my dress'
(Ovid, *Heroides*)

Synecdoche

Using a word for part of something to imply the whole, e.g.

carinae = 'keels' = 'ships' (Virgil, *Aeneid*)

Zeugma

Applying a verb or adjective to two nouns, though properly it only belongs to one, e.g.

longa tibi exsilia et uastum maris aequor arandum
'you must plough a long exile and a vast expanse of sea'
(Virgil, *Aeneid*)

[The notion of ploughing belongs metaphorically to crossing the sea, but it is also applied somewhat oddly to exile]

(6) Recitation

- Latin poetry was written to be read aloud
- In reciting verse, normal speech stress should be preserved, even though the stress of speech and the beat of the verse rhythm do not always or even typically coincide
- Stress and *ictus* generally coincide for a specific purpose only, e.g. in the last two feet of the hexameter line the coincidence of stresses produces an audible cadence signalling the end of the line
- The tension between speech and verse stress must have been evident to the trained ears of the poet and audience, though not to anyone unskilled in quantitative verse
- A 'scanning' reading of verse which stressed the verse *ictus* (beat) and suppressed the natural word accents was used from early times to teach Latin poetry – but for teaching only!

(7) The commonest types of metrical feet

- **iamb** ~ - ('di-dum')*
- **trochee** - ~ ('dum-di')
- **spondee** - - ('dum-dum')
- **dactyl** - ~ ~ ('dum-diddy')

*sometimes instead of an *iamb* poets substitute a *tribrach* ~ ~ ~ ('di-di-di')

It might be helpful to think of heavy and light syllables as corresponding to musical notes: if a heavy - is a crotchet, then a light ~ is a quaver: two quavers are equivalent to one crotchet. So a - is generally considered twice the length of a ~ (or a 'dum' is twice as long as a 'di').

n.b. the three beats (one heavy + two lights) of the dactyl are considered to take the same time to pronounce as the two heavy beats of the spondee: two light syllables being thought of as occupying the same 'space' as a single heavy. Hence, spondees and dactyls are often regarded as interchangeable in Latin metre.

(8) Rules for Heavy and Light syllables

1. Syllables are either heavy (-) or light (~)
2. Do not confuse heavy and light syllables with long and short vowels (for which, see below)
3. A light syllable contains a short vowel either on its own or followed by (a) a single consonant or (b) another vowel but without forming a diphthong
4. A heavy syllable contains (a) a long vowel (b) a diphthong (c) a vowel (long or short) followed by two consonants: these two consonants may be either in the same word or across two words
5. A long vowel always entails a heavy syllable, but a heavy syllable can contain a short vowel (e.g. before two consonants)

6. *h* does not count either as a vowel or consonant, e.g. *amat hostes* – the *at* syllable is not heavy, as it is not reckoned to be followed by two consonants; *mult(i) hostes* – *i* is elided as it is reckoned to be followed by another vowel (see Elision)
7. *i* and *u* standing before a vowel in the same syllable are consonants (English *y* and *w*)
8. *u* after *q* is not a separate vowel but part of a single (not double) consonant

n.b. most older books talk loosely of long and short *syllables*, but strictly speaking this is incorrect: only vowels are long or short

(9) Further notes on syllables

- In Latin words with two consonants together, the first consonant always belongs to the preceding syllable, e.g. *pec-tus*, *an-nus*
- A single consonant between vowels belongs to the succeeding syllable, e.g. *pe-cus*, *po-tus* – the ‘e’ of *pecus* is short, so the first syllable is light; the ‘o’ of *potus* is long, so the first syllable is heavy
- *x* and *z* count as double consonants (*x* = *ks*)
- If a plosive (*p*, *t*, *c*, *b*, *d*, *g*) is followed by a liquid (*r*, *l*) the consonant pair may sometimes go with the following syllable, e.g. *pat-ris* could also be *pa-tris*
- But if the plosive + liquid is in a compound word, the first consonant always goes with the preceding syllable, e.g. *ab-lego*, *ab-ripio*

(10) General rules for determining the length of vowels

Vowels can be either long or short, as in the difference in English between the short 'a' in 'cat' and the long 'a' in 'father'. Correct pronunciation (with the help of a good dictionary) is the surest guide to determining whether vowels are long or short. There are, however, some rules to help:

Long vowels are:

- diphthongs
- final *-u*
- final *-a* in the ablative singular and imperative
- final *-i*, except *mihi, tibi, sibi, ubi*, where it can be short
- final *-o*, except *ego, duo*, and adverbs *cito, modo*; later Latin poets sometimes scan the first-person singular verb ending *-o* as short
- final *-as, -es, or -os* are long, except in Greek names
- final *-is* is long only in first and second declensions ablative and dative plurals, or the third declension accusative plural ending (where it is used instead of *-es* for words whose genitive plural ends *-ium*)
- final *-e* of the second conjugation imperative, adverbs, and fifth declension nouns
- final *-us* of the fourth declension genitive singular, nominative and accusative plurals.

Short vowels are:

- the first vowel of a pair which do not form a diphthong, except for *fio*, which has a long *-i-* (short in *fieri*)
- final *-o* in *ego, duo, cito, modo* (adverb)
- final *-a* in nominative and vocative feminine singular, and in neuter plurals
- final *-is* except in the examples above
- final *-e* is short, except in the examples above
- final *-us* is short, except in the examples above
- final *-am, -em, or -um* are always short, the 'm' is elided before a word beginning with a vowel or 'h'

Long vowels

- All diphthongs are long
- Final *-u* is always long
- Final *-i* is long, except in *mihi, tibi, sibi, ubi*, where it is optional
- Final *-o* is usually long, except *ego, duo, cito, modo* (adverb)
- Final *-a* is long in ablative singular and imperative
- Final *-as, -es, or -os* are long, except in Greek proper names and other Greek words taken directly into Latin, e.g. *Aeneas* – short *-as*, but n.b. the preceding *-e-* is long
- Final *-is* is long only if it is either first and second declensions ablative / dative plural, or the third declension acc. plural ending (instead of *-es* for words whose gen. pl ends *-ium*).
- Final *-e* is only long if it is second conjugation imperative, adverbs, fifth declension and pronouns, e.g. *mone, late, die, me, te, se* (all long)
- Final *-us* is only long in fourth declension genitive singular, and nominative / accusative plural

Short vowels

- The first *-i-* in *mihi, tibi, sibi* is always short
- If two vowels together do not form a diphthong, the first is short, except in Greek names, e.g. *Aeneas* – the final *-e-* is long and *fio* – long *-i-* – though short in *fieri*
- Final *-o* in *ego, duo, cito, modo* (adverb) is short
- Final *-a* is short in nom. and voc. feminine singular, and in neuter plurals

- Final *-is* is short (e.g. nominatives, third declension genitive singular) except in the first and second declensions ablative / dative plural
- Final *-e* is short, except: second conjugation imperative, adverbs, fifth declension and pronouns
- Final *-us* is short, except fourth declension genitive singular, and nominative / accusative plural (but not fourth declension nominative singular)
- Final *-am*, *-em*, or *-um* are always short

(11) Rules of word stress (Accent)

- Stress in a word of two syllables always falls on the first syllable
- Stress in a polysyllabic word falls on the penultimate syllable if that syllable is heavy, e.g. *con-**fec**-tus*, *pa-**ten**-tis*
- If the penultimate syllable of a polysyllable is light, the stress falls on the ante-penultimate (the third syllable from the end of the word), even if it is light, e.g. *con-**fi**-ci-o*, ***a**-li-a*

(12) Elision

When a word ending in a vowel or *m* is followed by a word beginning with a vowel or *h*, the final syllable of the first word is elided: that is it is 'knocked out' and not counted as part of the metre, e.g.

- *hast(a) est* – two syllables
- *mens(am) ornat* – three syllables
- *magn(um) hostibus* – four syllables

(13) The Beat (Ictus)

1. The *ictus* or beat always falls on a heavy syllable

2. Not every heavy syllable carries an *ictus*
3. Light syllables never carry an *ictus*

(14) Caesura and Diaresis

A feature of the metre in Latin poetry is the *caesura*, from the verb *caedere*, ‘to cut’. This is a *metrical break* in the line that always occurs between two words but within one of the line’s feet. Its purpose is to divide the line into two (sometimes more) distinct units.

It should be emphasised that although the *caesura* often coincides with a break in the *sense* of the line, it need not do so since the *caesura* is a part of the metrical pattern of the verse, not the meaning of the sentence or clause. If a break in sense, such as a comma or semi-colon, occurs in the same place as the *caesura* the effect is to reinforce the division mid-way through the line.

The primary *caesura* in a typical Hexameter line falls between two words after the *ictus* of the third foot. If there is no break between words at this point, then the *caesura* falls after the *ictus* of the fourth foot instead. For example:

1 2 3 4 5 6
 - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ‡ - | - - | - ~ ~ | - -
Arma virumque canō, Trōiae quī prīmus ab ōrīs,

‡ = the *caesura*

‘I sing of arms and the man, who first from the shores of Troy
...’

(Virgil, *Aeneid*)

Diarexis by contrast is a break between words at the end of a foot instead of within a foot. The second pentameter line of the Elegiac couplet typically has a *diarexis* at the mid-way point where there is a coincidence of sense and metrical division:

- *Cynthia prima fuit; ‡ Cynthia finis erit*
- ‘Cynthia was the first; Cynthia will be the last’
(Propertius, *Eleqies* I/XII)

(15) The Hexameter

This classic metre was adopted by Latin poets from Greek models: Homer's poems are all in Greek Hexameters, and thereafter all epic verse was written in this metre. Because Latin is a more spondaic language than Greek – that is, Latin has a greater preponderance of heavy syllables, whereas Greek has more groups of dactylic lights – the Latin Hexameter line differs somewhat from its Greek model. Ennius in his *Annales* was the first Latin writer to employ Hexameters, and the form was perfected by Virgil in the *Aeneid*.

The Hexameter line consists of six feet, which can be either dactyls or spondees. The line is called a Dactylic Hexameter because it is thought of as consisting of six dactyls, with spondees allowed as substitutes in the first four feet. The fifth foot is very frequently a dactyl, and the sixth foot is always a spondee (with the length of the final syllable being regarded as indeterminate – it can be either heavy or light, the so-called principle of *brevis in longo*).

Hexameters are frequently enjambed (see 5. above), which helps to create the long, flowing narrative of epic.

Quintus Ennius (239-169 B.C.) wrote the first Latin epic in Greek Hexameters, his *Annales*, which presented the history of Rome from its mythical beginnings to the poet's own times. He provides a unique Hexameter in which the ictus and natural stress accents coincide throughout, and there is no caesura:

1	2	3	4	5	6								
-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-		-	-

sparsis hastis longis campus splendet et horret
'Strewn with long spears the field shines and bristles'

Such a line was **not** imitated by later writers. After Ennius, Latin poets refined the Hexameter and established some conventions:

- a heavily spondaic line (as *sparsis hastis longis* ...) was not usually admissible
- if a line begins with a spondee, the second foot is generally a dactyl

- in the first four feet, the *ictus* (beat) of the verse and the natural stress accent of the words do not coincide, to avoid placing excessive emphasis on the metre
- in the final two feet, the stress accent and *ictus* do coincide to form an audible cadence
- word breaks at the ends of foot divisions were generally avoided, again since this places too much emphasis on the metre
- a single syllable word at the end of a line was avoided
- the *caesura* falls between two words after the *ictus* of the third foot, or sometimes after the *ictus* of the fourth foot instead

In Virgil and other Golden Age poets, these rules are only violated when a specific ‘special effect’ is required.

(16) The Elegiac

The Elegiac Couplet was adopted from Greek models by Ennius and refined by Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius and Ovid. It is characterised by a hexameter line followed by a pentameter: this pentameter consists of two sets of two-and-a-half feet separated by a *diæresis*, i.e.

1 2 ½ 3 4 ½
 - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ‡ - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | -

(Feet 1 and 2 can be either dactyl or spondee)

In earlier elegiacs, such as those of Catullus, the pattern is fairly free, with the caesura of the pentameter sometimes being ignored and with sentences that run over several couplets. By the time of Ovid, however, the form was more fixed: each couplet was felt to be a self-contained unit so that each idea or sentence is begun and completed in one couplet, with a subject introduced in the hexameter which is expanded or developed by the pentameter; furthermore the *diæresis* in the pentameter was rigidly adhered to, and (especially in Ovid) the pentameter finishes on a word of two syllables, e.g.

1 2 3 4 5 6
 - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | -
arma graui numero uiolentaue bella parabam

1 2 ½ 3 4 ½
 - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ‡ - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | -
edere, materia conueniente modis.

‘I was preparing to tell in solemn measure of arms and violent wars, with the subject-matter agreeing with the metre.’ (Ovid, *Amores* I.i)

These notes are drawn from the following sources:

Allan, W.S.	<i>Vox Latina: The Pronunciation of Classical Latin</i> (CUP)
Flewett & Pantin	<i>A First Book of Latin Poetry</i> (Macmillan)
Harvey (ed)	<i>The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature</i> (OUP)
Jones & Sidwell	<i>Reading Latin</i> (CUP)
Morwood, J.	<i>Latin Grammar</i> (OUP)
Nussbaum, G.B.	<i>Vergil’s Metre: A Practical Guide for Reading Latin Hexameter Poetry</i> (Duckworth)
Wilkinson	<i>Golden Latin Artistry</i> (CUP)

As well as various websites, including articles on *Wikipedia*

A Poetical Glossary

Accent

A word's accent falls on the stressed syllable(s). In English verse, the beat and accent coincide, but in Latin (quantitative) verse the coincidence of metrical beat and word accent is generally intentionally avoided.

Alcaic

A type of metre consisting of a four-line pattern, the first two lines of which are the same. The poet Horace was very fond of Alcaic verse.

Asclepiad

A type of metre consisting of a two-line pattern, the rhythm of which in English is: 'One, two, buckle my shoe today / One, two, buckle my shoe, buckle my shoe today'.

Beat

The beat (or *Ictus*) marks the rhythm or pulse of the verse line, rather like the beat in music. As in music, the beat can be an obvious presence or only implicit – but it is always there. In a Latin Hexameter there are six beats coinciding with the first heavy syllable of each foot, making a characteristic rhythm.

Caesura

A division between words that typically occurs roughly at the midpoint of a line and always occur within a foot (q.v. *Diaeresis*). The mid-line *Caesura* is a metrical division of the line and not necessarily related to a pause for sense (i.e. it need not coincide with a comma or full stop).

Dactyl

From the Greek word *dactylos*, 'finger'. A type of metrical foot consisting of one heavy followed by two light syllables.

Diaeresis

A division between words that also occurs between feet: typical of the mid-way division of the Pentameter line in an Elegiac couplet (q.v.). The so-called 'bucolic diaeresis' occurs quite often after the fourth foot of the Hexameter in Virgil's pastoral poetry (hence the name). Not to be confused with the *Caesura* (q.v.), which occurs within a foot.

Elision

The metrical discounting of final vowels or -m before another word beginning with a vowel or h. Most scholars agree that these would not have been pronounced in recitation.

Foot/Feet

A line of verse can be divided into a series of metrical feet, each of which consists of a specific combination of heavy or light syllables. Each poetical foot is analogous to a bar in music. It is the different arrangement of these feet that determines the metre of the verse.

Elegiacs

The Elegiac couplet consists of a Hexameter (q.v.) followed by a Pentameter (q.v.). Originally in early Greek verse the elegy was a mournful dirge but in Latin poetry it has no such connotations.

Heavy syllables

A syllable is said to be heavy if it contains (a) a long vowel (b) a diphthong (c) a vowel (long or short) followed by two consonants.

Hendecasyllables

A verse line consisting of eleven syllables in which the metrical pattern typically runs: spondee, dactyl, trochee, trochee, spondee.

Hexameter

A verse line consisting of six feet, a mixture of dactyls and spondees – hence the line is often called a Dactylic Hexameter. This is the classic line of all epic poetry from Homer onwards.

Iamb/Iambic

An iamb is a type of metrical foot consisting of a light followed by a heavy syllable. An iambic line is one made up of such feet.

Ictus – see Beat**Light syllables**

A light syllable contains a short vowel either on its own or followed by (a) a single consonant or (b) another vowel but without forming a diphthong.

Lyric Metres

These consist of a variety of Greek metres originally designed for singing: Sapphics (qv), Alcaics, Hendecasyllables (qv.), Asclepiads, Scazons (Choliambic). By Classical Roman times it is unlikely that any were in fact set to music, although some scholars argue that Horace's *Carmina*, for example, were indeed written with musical accompaniment (e.g. *Horace's Odes and the Mystery of Do-Re-Mi* by Stuart Lyons).

Long vowels

Long vowels take longer to pronounce than short vowels (q.v.), in both Latin and English, e.g. the 'a' in father is longer than the 'a' in cat.

Metre

The pattern of verse determined by the arrangement of feet. Metrical patterns can be one line repeated (e.g. Hexameter) or a stanza of several different lines (e.g. Sapphic).

Pentameter

A line said to consist of five feet in the repeating pattern of two dactyls plus one long syllable (the two single syllables said to make up half a foot each), i.e. $2^{1/2} + 2^{1/2}$

Quantity

Quantity = syllable 'weight' i.e. whether a syllable is heavy or light (q.v.). The metrical patterns of Latin verse depend on the quantity of syllables not the natural accent of the words.

Sapphics

A type of verse metre named after the Greek poetess Sappho. It is a four-line stanza in which the first three lines are the same – trochee, spondee, dactyl, trochee, spondee – and the fourth shorter line has two feet only, usually a dactyl followed by a spondee or trochee.

Scansion

From the Latin verb *scandere*, 'to climb, mount' (English 'ascend'), scansion is the method of dividing a line of poetry into its constituent parts.

Scazon

A *Scazon* or 'limping iambic' is a six-foot line of mixed spondees and iambs, but always with an iamb in the fifth foot: the juxtaposition of an iamb + spondee or trochee produces a sudden stop or limp: 'di-dum, dum-di'.

Short vowels

Short vowels take less time to pronounce than long vowels (q.v.)

Spondee

A type of metrical foot consisting of two heavy syllables.

Stress – see Accent

Trochee

A type of metrical foot consisting of one heavy followed by one light syllable.

Poets that lasting Marble seek
Must carve in *Latine* or in *Greek*,
We write in Sand, our language grows,
And like the Tide our work o'erflows.

(Edmund Waller, *Of English Verse*)

In these lines Edmund Waller – whose epitaph we read in Chapter 15 of *Annus Horribilis* – makes the point that if a writer wishes his work to be permanent he should not write in the vernacular but choose Latin or Greek instead, since the ancient languages are permanent while our native tongues change from generation to generation. ‘*Chaucer* his Sense can only boast / The glory of his numbers lost,’ Waller continues. And we might add the same is true even for Shakespeare, whose English is so different from our current idiom that it must be laboriously explained to each new generation of schoolchildren almost as if it were a foreign language.

‘It may be that few modern authors are quite as good as Virgil or Horace; few ancient authors were, either. Good modern authors are better than mediocre ancient ones.’ (D.K. Money, *The English Horace*)

Waller’s lesson has been forgotten in modern times, but it was not lost on his contemporaries. D.K.

Money in his book *The*

English Horace (see recommended reading below) estimates the number of Neo-Latin poets in Britain alone between 1550 and 1750 at ten thousand. It is only comparatively recently that the ability to compose both prose and poetry in Latin has been entirely neglected: the argument presumably being that there’s no benefit in attempting to express your thoughts in a ‘dead’ language – though given that, as we have discovered, Latin was the dominant language of discourse across Europe for almost two thousand years, such an attitude seems a little shortsighted.

Chapter 2: Lyrical Latin

Much of what is beautiful in Latin is verse, since both its compactness of expression and flexibility of word order make Latin peculiarly well-suited to being cast into poetical form. So, in this and the next Chapter we’ll explore Latin poetry in more detail. Then, in the final Chapter, we will return to the subject hopefully with a more sympathetic appreciation of such arcane matters as metre and accent.

In *Annus Horribilis* we encountered some outstanding examples of Medieval Latin verse: notably the *Dies irae*, the *Stabat Mater* and the *O Fortuna* from the *Carmina Burana* collection. These differ from the Classical poetry of Roman authors like Virgil, Ovid and Catullus in three important respects:

(1) Such Medieval verse was generally intended to be sung, whereas Classical Latin verse was for recitation (the exception that proves the rule being the *Carmina* of Horace, which may have been written with musical accompaniment in mind)

(2) Such Medieval verse is accentual, i.e. it is poetry whose metrical rhythm or beat is based on the stress-accent of the words, just as is the case with English poetry

(3) Such Medieval verse often features rhymed line-endings, again in contrast to Classical verse. Rhyme signals the end of each line and creates an especially pleasing effect when sung.

Although Classical quantitative verse continued to be written throughout the Middle Ages, it is this stress-accented, rhyming lyric that is the distinctive creation of the Medieval period, and the form in which its greatest works were written. In Chapter 3 we'll explore that other kind of Latin poetry, *viz.* quantitative verse. But for now, a short explanation of some common types of accentual verse.

Iambic rhythm

Consider the following lines:

Attend all ye who list to hear our noble England's praise;
I tell of the thrice famous deeds she wrought in ancient days
When that great fleet invincible against her bore in vain
The richest spoils of Mexico, the stoutest hearts of Spain.
(Macaulay, *Armada*)

The lilt or rhythm of these lines is caused by regular alternation of accented and unaccented syllables, in this pattern:

/ / / / / /
At-tend all ye who list to hear our no-ble Eng-land's praise

i.e. 'di-dum, di-dum, di-dum' etc.

Each 'di-dum' is known as a 'foot'. Any given verse line consists of several such 'feet' arranged in a particular order. The ordering of the feet determines the metre of the verse.

In this case the foot is the same throughout: an *iamb* – so this metre is called *iambic*. The natural stress accents of English words makes them peculiarly well-suited to such iambic patterns. For example:

If music be the food of love, play on
(Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*)

This is the classic iambic pentameter of English blank verse. *Iambic* because each foot is a ‘di-dum’ *iamb*, and *pentameter* because each line consists of a chain of five *iamb*s:

1	2	3	4	5
/	/	/	/	/
If mu-	-sic be	the food	of love	play on

The iambic rhythm is less common in Latin than English, but there are some famous Medieval hymns which use it.

TWO IAMBIC HYMNS

(1) *O quanta, qualia*

This hymn by Peter Abelard (1079-1142) employs an iambic rhythm in lines of twelve syllables (or half-lines of six syllables each if you prefer). We will hear more about Abelard in Chapter 5, but for now it is sufficient to observe that not only was he a brilliant scholar, he was also a celebrated composer whose love songs were once the toast of Paris. In his later monastic life he composed a complete hymnal for the Monastery of the Paraclete where his beloved Heloise was abbess. Sadly all his secular songs are lost, and only a handful of his sacred works have been positively identified in manuscript sources, the best known being *O quanta qualia*.

*O quanta qualia sunt illa sabbata
quae semper celebrat superna curia,
quae fessis requies, quae merces fortibus,
cum erit omnia Deus in omnibus.*

*Vera Ierusalem est illa civitas,
cuius pax iugis est, summa iucunditas,
ubi non praevenit rem desiderium,*

nec desiderio minus est praemium.

*Quis rex, quae curia, quale palatium,
quae pax, quae requies, quod illud gaudium,
huius participes exponant gloriae,
si quantum sentiunt, possint exprimere.*

*Nostrum est interim mentem erigere
et totis patriam votis appetere,
et ad Ierusalem a Babylonia
post longa regredi tandem exsilia.*

*Illic molestiis finitis omnibus
securi cantica Sion cantabimus,
et iuges gratias de donis gratiae
beata referet plebs tibi, Domine.*

*Illic ex sabbato succedet sabbatum,
perpes laetitia sabbatizantium,
nec ineffabiles cessabunt iubili,
quos decantabimus et nos et angeli.*

*Perenni Domino perpes sit gloria,
ex quo sunt, per quem sunt, in quo sunt omnia;
ex quo sunt, Pater est, per quem sunt, Filius,
in quo sunt, Patris et Filii Spiritus.*

Notes:

1. quanta qualia – *quanta* and *qualia* (from *qualis*) are both neuter plural agreeing with the noun *sabbata*. The translation depends on whether we punctuate *O quanta, qualia sunt* or *O quanta qualia* – the first option yields ‘O how many, of what sort are the Sabbaths’, the second ‘O how many kinds are the Sabbaths’. It’s tempting to add ‘and’ in English: ‘how many *and* of what kind’. Helen Waddell in *Medieval Latin Lyrics* paraphrases beautifully: ‘How mighty are the Sabbaths, how mighty and how deep’
2. *sabbata* – neuter plural of *sabbatum*, a word unsurprisingly derived from Hebrew
3. *superna curia* – the *Curia* was the building in which the Roman Senate assembled, so metonymy for any council or governing body, here a celestial one
4. *fessis ... fortibus* – datives, ‘for the weary ... the strong’

5. omnia Deus in omnibus – literally: ‘God will be (*erit*) all things in everything’
6. iugis – ‘constant, continual’ i.e. ‘(Jerusalem’s) peace is everlasting’
7. ubi non praevenit rem desiderium – ‘when desire (*desiderium*) does not come before (*praevenit*) the matter itself (*rem*)’, i.e. desire does not anticipate its fulfilment; *nec desiderio minus est praemium* – ‘the reward (*praemium*) is not less (*minus*) than the desire (ablative *desiderio*), i.e. anything desired is instantly granted
8. exponant – subjunctive: ‘let them expound what king, what council, what sort of palace (*palatium*) ...’; who is expounding? The *participes huius gloriae*, ‘the participants of this glory’
9. si ... exprimere – ‘if they are able (subjunctive plural of *possum*) to express (*exprimere*) how much (*quantum*) they feel (*sentiant*)’
10. nostrum est ... erigere – ‘it is for us (*nostrum*, literally ‘ours’) to raise up (*erigere*) our hearts (*mentem*)’
11. totis ... appetere – ‘to seek (*appetere*) our native land (*patriam*) with all our prayers (*totis votis*)’
12. ad Ierusalem – Classical Latin would not use the preposition *ad* to express motion towards a city; here perhaps to make the distinction clear: from Babylon to Jerusalem
13. post longa ... exsilia – ‘after a long exile’, for which see the Book of *Exodus* and Psalm 136 in the Vulgate, *Super flumina Babylonis*, ‘By the rivers of Babylon’ (Psalm 137 in the King James version)
14. regredi – active infinitive of deponent *regredior*: ‘to return’
15. illic molestiis finitis omnibus – ‘in that place (*illic*) after all our troubles (*omnibus molestiis*) have been ended’: ablative absolute (see Appendix) with perfect participle passive of *finio*, ‘put to an end’
16. securi cantica Sion cantabimus – adjective *securus*, ‘free from fear, untroubled’, nominative plural; *cantabimus* – future tense: ‘we will sing’; *cantica* – neuter plural accusative; *Sion* – indeclinable, ‘of Sion’
17. iuges gratias – we have already seen *pax iugis*, here plural ‘everlasting thanks’
18. de donis gratiae – for the gifts (*de donis*) of grace (*gratiae*); note wordplay with preceding *gratias* (‘thanks’)
19. beata ... plebs – ‘the blessed multitude’; *referet* – future tense, ‘will give back’

20. *succedet* – another future tense, ‘will come after, succeed (to)’ followed by the dative in Classical Latin, but here ablative *ex sabbato*, ‘Sabbath follows Sabbath’
21. *perpes laetitia sabbatizantium* – ‘the continual happiness of those who are celebrating the Sabbaths’; *sabbatizantium* is genitive plural of the present participle of the Church Latin verb *sabbatizare*, ‘to observe the Sabbath’
22. *cessabunt* – still in the future tense, ‘will cease’; *ineffabiles iubili* – ‘unutterable cries (English ‘ineffable’) of joy (genitive of *iubilus*)’
23. *quos ... angeli* – ‘which (*quos*, i.e. the *ineffabiles*) both (*et ... et*) we and the angels will chant (future of *decantare*)’
24. *sit* – subjunctive (q.v. *fiat lux!*) of *est* with dative of possession *Perenni Domino* = ‘let eternal God have perpetual glory’
25. *ex quo ... per quem .. in quo* – ‘from whom ... through whom ... in whom’; *sunt omnia* – ‘there are all things’
26. *Pater est ... Filius ... Spiritus* – ‘he is the Father from whom ... the Son through whom ... the Spirit in whom’; understand *omnia* again: ‘there are all things’.

(2) Veni Creator Spiritus

This iambic hymn for Pentecost is attributed to Rabanus (or Hrabanus) Maurus (c.780-856), a pupil of Alcuin of York. It has proved popular with composers – Mahler included a version of it as the opening of his Eighth Symphony (1907) – and continues to be set: in 1997, composer Carl Rütti published a forty-part version for unaccompanied choir (see recommended listening below).

*Veni Creator Spiritus,
mentes tuorum visita,
imple superna gratia,
quae tu creasti pectora*

*Qui Paraclitus diceris,
altissimi donum Dei,
fons vivus, ignis, caritas,
et spiritalis unctio.*

*Tu septiformis munere,
dextrae Dei tu digitus,*

Alcuin of York (c.735-804) was a leading light of the so-called Carolingian Renaissance, a flowering of learning fostered by the emperor Charlemagne (c.742-814), during which Latin began to be taught systematically in order to ensure that priests could properly read and disseminate the text of the Vulgate Bible. Alcuin's pupil Rabanus Maurus, later archbishop of Mainz, wrote works on grammar as well as producing an encyclopaedia.

*tu rite promisso Patris,
sermone ditans guttura.*

*Accende lumen sensibus,
infunde amorem cordibus,
infirma nostri corporis
virtute firmans perpeti.*

*Hostem repellas longius,
pacemque dones protinus,
ductore sic te praeviso,
vitemus omne noxium.*

*Per te sciamus da Patrem,
noscamus atque Fillium,
teque utriusque Spiritum
credamus omni tempore.*

*Deo Patri sit gloria
et Filio qui a mortuis
surrexit ac Paraclito
in saeculorum saecula.*

Notes:

1. *veni* – imperative, ‘come’; *Spiritus* is fourth declension, so vocative ending *-us* (not *-e* as second declension, e.g. *Domine*); take *Creator Spiritus* either as adjective-noun ‘Creator Spirit’ or as two distinct nouns, ‘Creator, Holy Spirit’
2. *visita ... imple* – more imperatives, ‘visit ... fill’
3. *mentes tuorum* – ‘the souls of yours’ i.e. ‘of your own people’; *mens* here = ‘soul’
4. *pectora* – after *imple*: ‘fill the breasts/hearts of those which you have created’; *superna gratia* – ablative, ‘with celestial grace’
5. *qui Paraclitus diceris* – I have seen this line variously rendered as *Qui diceris Paraclitus*, *Qui Paraclitus dicitur* and *Qui dicitur Paraclitus*. Here the accent of *Par-ac-lit-us* falls on the penultimate syllable, but in the final verse (the doxology, see below) the accent falls on the ante-penultimate: *Par-ac-lit-o*
6. *spiritalis unctio* – ‘spiritual ointment’ (English, ‘unction’)
7. *tu septiformis munere* – literally: ‘you who are sevenfold (*septiformis*) in respect of your gift (ablative of *munus*)’ i.e. a sevenfold gift, a reference to the seven gifts of the Lord outlined

- in *Isaiah* xi.2: wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of the Lord
8. *dextrae Dei ... digitus* – ‘the finger of God’s right hand’ (the word *manus* is understood)
 9. *rite* – adverb, ‘according to ritual’ but also ‘rightly, fittingly’; *promisso Patris*, ‘by the promise of the Father’
 10. *sermone ditans guttura* – ‘enriching (*ditans*, present participle of *dito*) our throats (*guttura*) with speech (ablative of *sermo*)’; a reference to *Acts* ii.4: ‘they began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance’
 11. *accende ... infunde* – more imperatives, ‘kindle a light for our senses (*sensibus*), pour love in our hearts (*cordibus*)’
 12. *firman* – present participle of *firmo*, ‘fortifying the infirmities (*infirmia*) of our body (*nostri corporis*) with perpetual virtue (ablative, *virtute perpeti*)’
 13. *repellas* – present subjunctive, ‘let you repel the enemy further (*longius*)’ or simply an alternative for the imperative: ‘repel the enemy’
 14. *done* – another present subjunctive, ‘give’; *protinus* – ‘right away’
 15. *ductore te* – ablative, ‘with you as our leader’; *praevio* – also ablative, of *praeuius*, ‘leading the way’ (English: ‘previous’)
 16. *vitemus* – another subjunctive, of *vitare*, ‘to avoid’; *noxium* – ‘harm’
 17. *da* – imperative, ‘grant (that) ...’; *sciamus ... noscamus ... credamus* – subjunctives, ‘we may know ... recognise ... believe in’; *credo* + accusative is a transitive verb = ‘believe in, have faith in’, otherwise it is intransitive and takes the dative when it means ‘believe, trust (someone)’
 18. *utriusque Spiritum* – ‘the Spirit of both’, *utrius* is genitive of *uterque*
 19. *Deo Patri sit gloria* – dative of possession: ‘let God the Father have glory’, also datives *Filio ... Paraclito*; this final verse is not part of the original hymn, but is the doxology, from the Greek word *δοξα* (*doxa*), meaning – in a Church context – ‘glory’
 20. *mortuis surrexit* – ‘rose from (among) the dead’, note how Latin prefers the plural where English uses a singular collective noun
 21. *in saeculorum saecula* – the formulaic finale, literally: ‘into the ages of the ages’, derived from the Hebrew way of saying ‘for ever and ever’.

Trochaic rhythm

If we reverse the *iamb* to make a ‘dum-di’ we get another type of foot known as a *trochee*, e.g.

/ / / / / / /
Com-rades, leave me here a lit-tle, while as yet ‘tis ear-ly morn
(Tennyson, *Locksley Hall*)

Here the stress is on the first syllable of each foot, not the second. The trochee is very commonly found in Medieval Latin verse – we have already read and enjoyed these examples:

Dies irae, dies illa
solvet saeculum in favilla,
teste David cum Sibylla.
(*Annus Horribilis*, Ch. 11)

and

Stabat Mater dolorosa,
iuxta crucem lacrimosa,
dum pendebat Filius
(*Annus Horribilis*, Ch. 12)

Both are in eight-syllabled trochaic metre, the stress falling on the first beat of each ‘dum-di’ trochee, so:

/ / / /
Di-es ir-ae, di-es il-la

and

/ / / /
Stab-at mat-er dol-or-o-sa

A slightly different scheme is found in the *O Fortuna* of the *Carmina Burana*:

O Fortuna,
velut luna
statu variabilis,
semper crescis
aut decrescis;

vita detestabilis

(*Annus Horribilis*, Ch. 13)

Which is still trochaic ('dum-di') but this time each stanza consists of two four-syllable lines followed by a seven-syllable line:

/ /
O For-tun-a
/ /
vel-ut lun-a
/ / / /
stat-u var-i-a-bil-is

TWO TROCHAIC LYRICS

(1) *Ave Maris stella*

This anonymous Vespers hymn in honour of the Virgin goes back at least as far as the ninth century, possibly earlier. The trochaic rhythm is particularly strong throughout, as most of the words consist of two syllables with the stress falling on the first syllable, e.g.

/ / /
Av-e mar-is stel-la.

Many composers down the centuries have found this hymn inspirational, including Byrd, Palestrina, Monteverdi, Grieg, Saint-Saëns, Elgar, Peter Maxwell Davies and, right up to date, Carl Rütti (who has also set the *Veni Creator Spiritus* above). In 2004, Cecilia McDowall composed a setting for solo soprano, chorus and string orchestra (see recommended listening below) – McDowall has also set the *Stabat Mater* and *Personent hodie*, the texts of which you'll find in *Annus Horribilis*, Chapter 12.

*Ave, maris stella,
Dei mater alma,
atque semper virgo,
felix coeli porta.*

*Sumens illud Ave
Gabrielis ore,
funda nos in pace,*

mutans Evae nomen.

*Solve vincla reis
profer lumen caecis,
mala nostra pelle,
bona cuncta posce.*

*Monstra te esse matrem,
sumat per te preces
qui pro nobis natus,
tulit esse tuus.*

*Virgo singularis,
inter omnes mitis,
nos culpis solutos
mites fac et castos.*

*Vitam praesta puram,
iter para tutum,
ut videntes Jesum
semper collaetemur.*

*Sit laus Deo Patri,
summum Christo decus,
Spiritus Sancto,
honor, tribus unus.*

Notes:

1. *ave* – the imperative, meaning ‘hail’ (see *Annus Horribilis*, Ch. 2), but also here a pun on the Latin name *Eva* (‘Eve’)
2. *maris* – genitive; another pun, on the Latin name *Maria*, since the plural of neuter noun *mare* is also *maria*
3. *mater alma* – hence the expression *alma mater* (see *Annus Horribilis*, Ch. 3)
4. *felix ... porta* – ‘fortunate portal’, the gateway through which heaven (*coeli*, genitive) entered the world
5. *sumens* – present participle from *sumo*, ‘receiving’
6. *Gabrielis ore* – ‘from the mouth of (the angel) Gabriel’, as related in *Luke* i.28
7. *mutans Evae nomen* – the present participle of *muto*, ‘exchanging, borrowing’; Mary borrows the name of Eve in the form of the pun *ave* but also takes on Eve’s role as the (new) mother of humanity

8. solve ... profer ... pelle ... posce – imperatives, ‘loosen (the bonds, *vincla*, neuter plural) ... bring (light) ... drive out (our evils) ... offer (all good things)’
9. reis ... caecis – datives of *reus* (‘the accused’) and *caecus* (‘blind’)
10. monstra – imperative (‘show’) followed by accusative + infinitive ‘that ...’ (see Appendix) *te matrem esse*
11. sumat – present subjunctive from *sumo*, ‘let him receive’
12. tulit esse tuus – *tulit* is perfect tense of *fero*, ‘bear, endure’: ‘allowed (himself) to be yours’, i.e. Jesus who allowed himself to be born from Mary
13. singularis ... mitis – ‘matchless ... gentle’
14. nos ... solutos – ‘we who have been freed’; *solutos* is the perfect participle passive from *solvo*; *culpīs* – dative, ‘from our faults’
15. fac – imperative, ‘make us gentle (*mites*) and chaste (*castos*)’
16. praesta ... para – more imperatives, ‘provide (for us) ... prepare (for us) ...’
17. ut ... collaetemur – ut + subjunctive (see Appendix): ‘so that we can rejoice’, the verb is deponent *laetor* strengthened by the suffix *col-*, a common habit in later Latin; *videntes* – present participle from *video*, ‘while we are seeing’
18. sit laus – another version of the doxology (compare with the last verse of *Veni Creator Spiritus*)
19. Deo ... Christo ... Spiritui Sancto – all datives (of possession with *sit*); *summum decus* – ‘the greatest dignity’
20. tribus – dative agreeing with *Deo*, *Christo* and *Spiritui Sancto*, supply ‘who are’ with *unus*.

(2) Huc usque

This lament from the famous *Carmina Burana* collection (see *Annus Horribilis*, Chapter 13) is in three-line stanzas, with each line having seven syllables. The trochaic rhythm is not quite as clear as *Ave maris stella* – in the first stanza, for example, only the last line is obviously trochaic; nonetheless, the alternation of strong and weak accents throughout characterises the poem, which was probably intended to be sung anyway (the musical setting would have made the rhythm obvious).

The stanzas rhyme in pairs: aab, ccb, dde, ffe. I have (rashly perhaps) moved the verse beginning *Sum in tristitia* to follow that beginning *Hoc dolorem cumulat*, since this preserves the rhyme scheme without

drastically altering the flow of the narrative – usually *Sum in tristitia* is given as the final stanza.

Huc usque has attracted much scholarly comment, with some arguing that it really is the complaint of a pregnant woman abandoned by her lover, some even asserting it is by Heloise herself (for whom, see Chapter 5), while others deny it is anything other than a Medieval monkish classroom exercise. Whatever the truth, there's no escaping the poem's air of sincerity – it's easy to feel the poignancy of the girl's awkward situation.

*Huc usque, me miseram,
rem bene celaveram,
et amavi callide.*

*Res mea tandem patuit,
nam venter intumuit,
partus instat gravidæ.*

*Hinc mater me verberat,
hinc pater improperat,
ambo tractant aspere.*

*Sola domi sedeo,
egredi non audeo,
nec in palam ludere.*

*Cum foris egredior
a cunctis inspicior
quasi monstrum fuerim.*

*Cum vident hunc uterum,
alter pulsatur alterum,
silent dum transierim.*

*Semper pulsat cubito,
me designant digito,
ac si mirum fecerim.*

*Nutibus me indicant,
dignam rogo iudicant,
quod semel peccaverim.*

*Quid percurram singula?
Ego sum in fabula,
et in ore omnium.*

*Hoc dolorem cumulat,
quod amicus exsulat
propter illud paululum.*

*Sum in tristitia
de eius absentia,
in doloris cumulum.*

*Ob patris saevitiam
recessit in Franciam
a finibus ultimis.*

*Ex eo vim patior
iam dolore morior,
semper sum in lacrimis.*

Notes:

1. huc usque – ‘until now’
2. me miseram – Latin puts exclamations into the accusative
3. celaveram – pluperfect, ‘I had hidden’
4. bene ... callide – adverbs, ‘well ... cunningly’
5. res mea – ‘my condition’; *patuit* – ‘was exposed’
6. intumuit – ‘swelled’
7. partus instat gravidae – *partus*, ‘birth’; *instare*, ‘to loom, be upon (one)’; *gravidae* – genitive, ‘of the (i.e. one who is) pregnant’
8. hinc – ‘hence’, ‘for this reason’
9. verberat ... improperat – ‘beats ... reproaches’
10. ambo tractant aspere – ‘both treat me harshly’
11. domi – locative, ‘at home’
12. in palam – *palam* is an adverb, ‘openly, publicly’, but here with the preposition *in* it is treated as if a noun: ‘in public’
13. foris – adverb, ‘out doors’
14. inspicior – passive, ‘I am gazed at by all (*a cunctis*)’
15. quasi ... fuerim – ‘as if I were ...’, perfect subjunctive of *sum*
16. uterum – accusative of *uterus*, ‘womb’
17. alter pulsat alterum – ‘one nudges another’
18. dum transierim – ‘until I have passed by’, the sense of anticipation or waiting for something to happen perhaps dictates why the verb (from *transeo*) is subjunctive; the need to preserve the rhyme might also be an explanation
19. cubito ... digito – ablatives, ‘with (their) elbow ... finger’; *me designant*, ‘they point at me’
20. fecerim – another perfect subjunctive: ‘if I had become a marvel’
21. nutibus – ‘with their nods’
22. dignam rogo iudicant – accusative + infinitive (see Appendix) with *esse* implied: ‘they judge that I am fit for a funeral pyre (*rogo*, ablative of *rogus*)’
23. peccaverim – another rhyming perfect subjunctive, ‘because once I had (might have) sinned’
24. quid percurram singula – *percurram*, present subjunctive of *percurro*, ‘(mentally) run over’; *singula*, neuter, ‘each thing’; an echo of Ovid’s *singula quid referam* (*Amores* I.5): ‘should I go over each thing in turn?’
25. in fabula – ‘the subject of gossip’, ‘the talk of the town’
26. amicus exsulat – her lover has gone into exile because of (*propter*) that trifle (*illud paululum* – diminutive of *paulus*)

27. *sum in tristitia* – this line has only six syllables, all the others have seven
28. *de eius absentia* – ‘because of his (*eius*) absence’
29. *in ... cumulum* – ‘in an increasing amount (of) ...’; *cumulus*, ‘pile, heap’ (English, ‘in a heap of trouble’)
30. *recessit* – the *amicus*, who has withdrawn to France because of his father’s anger; *a finibus ultimis*, ‘from the farthest borders’ – does she mean where she lives is on the edge of civilisation? (Abelard felt himself to be just such an exile when he was sent to a monastery in far-flung Brittany.)
31. *ex eo* – ‘for this reason’
32. *patior ... morior* – deponents, so active, ‘I suffer violence (*vim*) ... I am dying from grief (*dolore*, ablative)’
33. *in lacrimis* – ‘in tears’ (English, ‘lachrymose’).

As we mentioned in the previous Chapter, Latin verse comes in two flavours: accentual verse of the kind we are familiar with from English poetry, and quantitative verse – that is, poetry based on the so-called quantity of syllables (syllabic weight) rather than the natural stress of the words.

On first acquaintance Latin quantitative verse is horribly confusing, so used are we to hearing the metrical rhythm of a line beat time with the stress accents of the words. In quantitative verse, by contrast, the metrical rhythm and the word stress are distinct: whether they coincide or not is up to the discretion of the poet. But it is worth persevering, for not only are the finest works of Classical Latin written in quantitative metre, but such verse occurs frequently on inscriptions and epitaphs.

Take for example two lines of an epitaph inscribed to the memory of Anna Morton née Wortley (d. 1632), from Latimer in Yorkshire:

*Anna vale longum quae vivens nupta marito
Es bino trino mortua nupta deo.*

We’ll work on translating it later, but for now it is enough to observe that this is an example of an elegiac couplet in quantitative metre – famously the metre of Classical love poetry from Catullus to Ovid. Here it is employed in its original mournful context (the sense we still preserve in the English word ‘elegy’), as it was also

used by Catullus in his immortal lines on the death of his brother that end with *atque in perpetuum, frater, ave atque vale*, ‘and forever, brother, hail and farewell’.

What is Quantity?

But what do we mean by ‘quantitative’ verse? Put simply, it is a metrical scheme based on the ‘weight’ of syllables. Which explanation only raises another question: what is syllable ‘weight’? Each syllable of a line of verse is regarded as being either heavy or light (its ‘quantity’) according to certain fixed rules. It is the specific pattern of heavy and light syllables that determines the metre of the verse.

The earliest Latin poetry written in the old Saturnian metre may or may not have been based on the stress accents of words (scholars continue to debate the issue), but when the Romans encountered Greek culture they were consumed by it. Quintus Ennius (239-169 B.C.) wrote the first Latin epic in hexameters – the metre of Homer’s *Iliad* and *Odyssey* – and thereafter all Classical Latin verse used such Greek quantitative metres.

Syllables vs. Vowels

Unfortunately, older Latin textbooks (and some modern ones) confuse syllable weight with vowel length. This issue was clarified by Professor W. Sidney Allen in his definitive study *Vox Latina* in 1965: syllables have ‘weight’ (i.e. are either heavy or light) – this being a convention of verse – whereas vowels are either long or short depending on their natural pronunciation. So, for example, the final ‘a’ of *feminā* (nominative) is a short vowel – and it is always pronounced as a short vowel regardless of whether it crops up in prose or poetry. But the final ‘a’ of *feminā* (ablative) is long – ‘aah’ – and is always pronounced long.

How do you know if a vowel is long or short? That’s no problem, fortunately: dictionaries and grammar books always mark long vowels (e.g. *habeō*, *habēre*); unmarked vowels are therefore short.

In contrast, the metrical weight or quantity of a syllable in a line of verse can vary according to certain complicated rules (see panel).

Scansion I – The Hexameter

Confused? Let's look again at the first line of the Latimer epitaph:

Anna vale longum quae vivens nupta marito

Scansion is the method of ‘scanning’ a line of verse in order to indicate the pattern of syllables which makes up the metrical scheme. Placing a $\bar$ symbol above a syllable in standard scansion notation indicates it is heavy, whereas a $\tilde$ symbol indicates it is light.

Unfortunately (again) we court more confusion as these are the

Rules for scansion and determining syllable quantity:

- A light syllable contains a short vowel either on its own or followed by (a) a single consonant or (b) another vowel but without forming a diphthong
- A heavy syllable contains (a) a long vowel (b) a diphthong (c) a vowel (long or short) followed by two consonants: these two consonants may be either in the same word or in two separate words
- If the second consonant of a two-consonant pair is *l* or *r* the previous syllable if it contains a short vowel can be counted as either light or heavy
- A long vowel always entails a heavy syllable, but a heavy syllable can contain a short vowel (i.e. before two consonants)
- *i* and *u* standing before a vowel in the same syllable are consonants
- *h* does not count either as a vowel or consonant
- *u* after *q* is not a separate vowel but part of a single (not double) consonant
- if a word ending in a vowel or *m* is followed by a word beginning with a vowel or *h*, the final syllable of the first word is *elided*: that is it is 'knocked out' and not counted as part of the metre

very same symbols traditionally used to indicate long and short vowels! Take a deep breath. To make matters a little clearer, hopefully, I have indicated a long vowel with a $\bar$ directly over the relevant letter (all other vowels are short), and placed the scansion symbols on the line above. Soldiering on, here is the line scanned:

1 2 3 4 5 6
 - ~ ~ | - - | - - | - - | - ~ ~ | - -
Anna valē longum quae vīvens nupta marītō

If we isolate the metrical scheme we get the following:

- ~ ~ | - - | - - | - - | - ~ ~ | - -

This, it turns out, is the classic hexameter line of Ennius, Virgil and the Latin epic poets, e.g.

1 2 3 4 5 6
 - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - - | - - | - ~ ~ | - -
Arma virumque canō, Trōiae quī prīmus ab ōrīs

‘I sing of arms and the man, who first from the shores of
 Troy ...’

(Virgil, *Aeneid* I.1)

The line is called a hexameter (from the Greek word for six) because it is divided into six metrical ‘feet’. Each foot consists of either a dactyl - ~ ~ (‘dum diddy’) or a spondee - - (‘dum dum’).

It might be helpful to think of these heavy and light syllables as corresponding to musical notes: a heavy - (‘dum’) syllable is equivalent to a crotchet or full note, while a light ~ (‘di’) is equivalent to a quaver or half note. In music, two quavers

occupy the same time as one crotchet; so a heavy - can be thought of as twice the length of a light ~ (or a ‘dum’ is twice as long as a ‘di’). In hexameter lines, this means that a trochee (- ~) can be substituted for a dactyl (- ~ ~), both occupying one ‘foot’.

The commonest types of metrical feet:

- iamb ~ - (‘di-dum’)
- trochee - ~ (‘dum-di’)
- spondee - - (‘dum-dum’)
- dactyl - ~ ~ (‘dum-diddy’)

The Caesura and Leonine Rhyme

In Classical Latin poetry, the hexameter conventionally has a division called the *caesura* (from the verb *caedere*, ‘to cut’) at roughly the mid-way point of the line, usually in the middle of the third foot. This was originally a break in the metrical scheme only, not necessarily a pause in the sense. Sometimes, though, the *caesura* is reinforced by a sense break, as in Virgil’s line quoted above where it occurs after the word *cano*. By Medieval times this division had become so definite that it is often marked by rhyme, effectively breaking the hexameter into two separate lines: such an internal rhyme is known as a leonine rhyme.

An example of a rhymed hexameter epitaph from St. Albans Cathedral:

Vir Domini v̄erus jacet h̄ic herem̄ita Roḡerus
Et sub eō clarus merit̄is herem̄ita Siḡarus.

‘A true man of god lies here, the hermit Roger
And beneath him famous for his services the hermit Sigar.’

Both lines are divided at the *caesura* by the rhyming of *verus ... Rogerus* and *clarus ... Sigarus*. They also rhyme at the end of each line.

‘Shave and a Haircut’ – *The Cadence*

Before we move on to translate some examples, there is one other feature of the hexameter line worth noting. The last two feet of most hexameters form a characteristic cadence consisting of a dactyl (fifth foot) and a spondee (sixth foot), in which the metrical beat and the word stress coincide: ‘dum-diddy dum-dum’ or, in English, ‘shave and a haircut’.

As mentioned above, throughout the rest of the line there is no firm connection between beat and word stress, but this distinctive cadence serves to provide listeners (Latin poetry was always read aloud) with an aural signal that the line has come to end – such was also the function in later times of rhyme. For example, in Virgil’s first line of the *Aeneid* we have:

5 6
- ~ ~ | - -
pr̄mus ab ōr̄is

Where the natural word stress falls on the first beat of *pr̄mus* and of *ōr̄is*. The Latimer epitaph has exactly the same rhythm:

5 6
- ~ ~ | - -
nupta mar̄itō

Where the stress of *marītō* falls on the long ī. The cadence does not have to begin on a new word, as in the rhymed hexameter from St. Albans:

5 6
 - ~ ~ | - -
(herem)-īta Rogērus

The long ī in *heremīta* and ē in *Rogērus* are where the word stress falls. This audible cadence helps us to remember that Latin poetry must always be read aloud.

A final note: the very last syllable of each line can be either heavy or light, for the purpose of the metre it is regarded as being heavy (or at least indeterminate). So the *-us* of *Rogērus* is light, but since it falls at the end of the line it may be regarded as heavy.

‘Yet some men say in many parts of England that King Arthur is not dead, but had by the will of our Lord Jesu into another place; and men say that he shall come again, and he shall win the holy cross ... But many men say that there is written upon his tomb this verse:

HIC IACET ARTHURUS, REX QUONDAM REXQUE FUTURUS’
 (Malory, *Le Morte d'Arthur* Book XXI, Chapter 7)

Scanned:

1 2 3 4 5 6
 - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~
Hīc iacet Arthūrus, rex quondam rexque futūrus.

Notes:

1. a hexameter line with leonine rhyme (*Arthurus ... futurus*)
2. hic – we have already seen two examples of *iacet (h)īc* above; handily for scansion the phrase *hīc iacet* forms a dactyl (so long as the next word begins with a vowel); the ‘ī’ is long in *hīc* meaning ‘here’ – distinguish from the pronoun *hic* (nominative masculine singular) which has a short ‘i’
3. quondam – adverb, ‘formerly’, ‘in ancient times’

4. *futurus* – future participle of *sum, esse*; in poetry and in later Latin prose, the future participle is often used to express purpose (see Appendix).

Scansion II – The Pentameter: Elegiac Couplets

Turning again to the Latimer epitaph we encountered at the beginning of the chapter, we can see that the second line of the couplet is slightly different from the first:

$\bar{\quad} \quad \bar{\quad} | \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} | \bar{\quad} \bar{\quad} \sim \sim | \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim | \bar{\quad}$
Es bīnō trīnō mortua nupta deō

This is the so-called pentameter line, as it consists of five feet in the pattern $2 \frac{1}{2} + 2 \frac{1}{2}$, i.e.

$\bar{\quad} \sim \sim | \bar{\quad} \sim \sim | \bar{\quad} \quad \times 2$

In the first half we can replace a dactyl ($\bar{\quad} \sim \sim$) with a spondee ($\bar{\quad} \bar{\quad}$), just as with hexameter lines. However, the second half must always contain two dactyls. Pairing a hexameter and a pentameter forms an elegiac couplet. In our example, the break in the pentameter at the halfway point (known as *diæresis*) is further emphasised by another leonine rhyme (*trino ... deo*)

The elegiac couplet was adopted from Greek models and quickly refined by the Latin love elegists Catullus, Tibullus, Propertius, Sulpicia and Ovid. For example:

(a) hexameter:

$\begin{array}{cccccc} 1 & & 2 & & 3 & 4 & & 5 & & 6 \\ \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \end{array}$
arma grauī numerō uiolentaque bella parābam

(b) pentameter:

$\begin{array}{ccccccc} 1 & & 2 & & \frac{1}{2} & 3 & & 4 & & \frac{1}{2} \\ \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \sim \sim & | & \bar{\quad} \quad \end{array}$
edere, materiā conueniente modīs

‘I was preparing to tell in solemn measure of arms and violent wars, with the subject-matter agreeing with the metre.’

The couplet is generally felt to be a self-contained unit, thus making it an ideally compact vehicle for pithy epigrams (as the poet Martial knew) or poignant sentiments suitable for epitaphs.

ELEGIAC EPITAPHS

(1) From Latimer, Yorkshire

*Anna vale longum quae vivens nupta marito
Es bino trino mortua nupta deo.*

(Anna Morton née Wortley, 1632)

Scanned:

1 2 3 4 5 6
- ~ ~ | - - | - - | - - | - ~ ~ | - -
Anna valē longum quae vīvens nupta marītō
1 2 ½ 3 4 ½
- - | - - | - | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | -
Es bīnō trīnō mortua nupta deō

Notes:

1. Anna vale – see *Annus Horribilis*, Chapter 2 for *vale* and other conversational Latin
2. longum – adverb with *vivens*, ‘living long’
3. quae ... nupta – subject of *quae* is *Anna*; *nupta* is the perfect participle of *nubo*, ‘marry’, so ‘having been married’ or ‘a wife’
4. marito ... bino – dative: ‘to a second husband’ or ‘to a pair of husbands’, i.e. she was married twice. *Bini*, ‘two each’ or ‘a pair’, is usually plural: here it is singular, presumably to make a nice poetic jingle as well as a contrast: *marito bino ... trino deo*
5. trino ... deo – *trini* (plural) is ‘three each’ or ‘three’; but in the singular it specifically means ‘threefold’ or ‘triple’, so here ‘a triple god’ i.e. the Trinity; literally then, ‘you are a wife to a triple god’, i.e. you are married a third time to god
6. mortua – nominative (short final ‘a’, see scansion) perfect participle active of deponent verb *morior*, agreeing with *Anna*, ‘having died’ or ‘dead’
7. For Anna’s father, see (5) below.

(2) From Holy Trinity Church, Stratford-upon-Avon

Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem

Terra tegit, populus maeret, Olympus habet.

(William Shakespeare, 1616)

Scanned:

1 2 3 4 5 6
- ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - -
Judiciō Pylium, geniō Socrat(em), arte Marōnem
1 2 ½ 3 4 ½
- ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | - | - ~ ~ | - ~ ~ | -
Terra tegit, populus maeret, Olympus habet

Notes:

1. *Judicio ... genio ...*
arte - ablatives
describing
Shakespeare: 'in
judgement/discern
ment ... in
inspiration ... in
skill'. The
translation begins
more smoothly if we

The Shakespeare memorial

Judicio Pylium, genio Socratem, arte Maronem
Terra tegit, populus moeret, Olympus habet.
Stay, passenger, why goest thou by so fast?
Read, if thou canst, whom envious death hath placed
Within this monument: Shakespeare, with whom
Quick nature doed; whose name doth deck his tomb
Far more than cost; sith all that he had writ
Leaves living art but page to serve his wit.
Obiit ano doi 1616. Aetatis 53. Die 23 Ap.

- take the second line first, and then supply a link such as
'(he who was) a Nestor in judgement ...'
2. *Pylium - Pylius* is an adjective, 'belonging to Pylos', the birthplace of Nestor, thus it also refers to Nestor himself, the wise sage whose advice was invaluable to the Greeks during the Trojan War; the 'y' is a transliteration of the Greek letter *υ* (*upsilon*), so counts as a (short) vowel
 3. *Socratem* - two points of scansion to notice: firstly, the first syllable of *Sōcrates* should be heavy, as the 'o' is a long vowel, but here it is scanned as light; secondly, the final syllable is elided as it ends in *-m* before the next word *arte* which begins with a vowel - this elision means the syllable is not counted
 4. *Maronem* - the full name of the poet we know in English as Virgil was Publius Vergilius Maro

5. *tego ... maeret ... habet* – all present tense, ‘covers ... mourn ... holds’
6. *Olympus* – like *Pylum*, the ‘y’ here = Greek *upsilon* so a (short) vowel, but the syllable is heavy because followed by two consonants; the word is an appropriate substitute for the Christian heaven in the context of an epitaph invoking Shakespeare’s Greek and Roman counterparts.

(3) From Gloucester Cathedral

This poignant couplet is inscribed on a brass plaque on the floor of the Lady Chapel:

*Parve, nec invideo, sine me, puer, ibis ad astra,
Parve, nec inideas, laetus ad astra sequar.*

(Charles Sutton, aged seven days)

Scanned:

1	2	3	4	5	6
- ~ ~	- ~ ~	- ~ ~	- ~ ~	- ~ ~	- -
<i>Parve, nec invideo, sine me, puer, ibis ad astra,</i>					
1	2	½	3	4	½
- ~ ~	- ~ ~	- -	- ~ ~	- ~ ~	-
<i>Parve, nec inideas, laetus ad astra sequar</i>					

Notes:

1. the first line is modelled on Ovid’s *Tristia*, Book I line 1: *Parve, nec invideo, sine me, liber, ibis in urbem*, ‘Little book, I begrudge it not, you will go to the city without me’, substituting vocative *puer* for *liber* and *ad astra* for *in urbem*. The pentameter touchingly expands the sentiment
 2. *inideas* – present subjunctive of *invideo* which is intransitive so does not take a direct object: ‘may you not begrudge it’, or simply, ‘do not begrudge it’
 3. *laetus* – translate as adverb, ‘happily’
- sequar* – future tense of *sequor*, ‘I will follow (you)’; the present subjunctive is also *sequar*, but the sense seems to be future

A HENDECASYLLABIC EPITAPH

The hendecasyllable is a Classical verse metre consisting of eleven syllables per line which was much used by Catullus (c.84-54 B.C.) for light and occasional verse. He famously employed hendecasyllables for two poems about ‘my sweetheart’s pet sparrow’ (*passer deliciae meae puellae*, Poem 2), though some scholars argue that what Catullus in fact meant by his ‘sparrow’ was something rather ruder, and that the sparrow’s death which he eloquently mourns in Poem 3 (*passer mortuus est meae puellae*) is actually a joke about impotence! Blissfully unaware of any such *double entendre*, the following inscription from a marble plaque found at Auch, France in the second century A.D. is inspired by Catullus.

The metrical scheme is eleven syllables in five feet: spondee (or iamb) – dactyl – trochee – trochee – spondee (final syllable can be either heavy or light), i.e.

- - | - ~ ~ | - ~ | - ~ | - -

Epitaph on a pet dog

*Quam dulcis fuit ista, quam benigna,
Quae cum viveret, in sinu iacebat
Somni conscia semper et cubilis.
O factum male, Myia, quod peristi.
Latrares modo, si quis adcubaret
Rivalis dominae, licentiosa.
O factum male, Myia, quod peristi.
Altum iam tenet insciam sepulcrum,
Nec seuire potes nec insilire,
Nec blandis mihi morsibus renides.*

Scanned (first line only):

- - | - ~ ~ | - ~ | - ~ | - -

Quam dulcis fuit ista, quam benigna

Notes:

1. quam – exclamation, ‘how ...’
2. ista – ‘that (female) dog’
3. cum viveret – *cum* + subjunctive, ‘while she lived’

4. in sinu iacebat – ‘lay in my lap’; this echoes the first Catullus *passer* poem: *quem in sinu tenere* (2.2)
5. conscia – adjective *consciūs*, ‘sharing in’ here takes the genitives of *somnus*, ‘sleep’ and *cubile*, ‘bed’
6. o factum male – ‘oh, it is badly done!’, a direct quote from Catullus’ poem on the death of the sparrow: *o factum male, o miselle passer!* (3.16)
7. Myia – the dog’s name, from the Greek *μυία*, ‘fly’ or ‘midge’ (Latin *musca*); it scans as a trochee, heavy-light
8. quod peristi – *quod* = ‘because’ or ‘that’; *peristi* – perfect tense of *pereo* (English ‘perish’)
9. altum ... sepulcrum – *altus* can mean ‘high’ or, as here, ‘deep’; neuter *sepulcrum* is the subject of the verb *tenet*, ‘holds’
10. insciam – accusative, ‘unaware’, referring to the dog
11. sevire ... insilire – infinitives after *nec potes*: *sevire* is a variant spelling of *saevire*, ‘behave ferociously’ or ‘growl’; *insilire*, ‘jump’
12. blandis ... morsibus – ablative; *morsus* (fourth declension) is ‘a bite’, but taken with *blandus* better to translate ‘with affectionate nips’

renides – *renideo* can mean ‘gleam’ or ‘reflect’ but also ‘smile back at’ or ‘beam’ in the same sense as English ‘a beaming grin’; the verb is intransitive, so the object is dative *mihi*

Verba Modulata

Mark Walker wonders why we Latin poets don’t more often turn to writing song lyrics

In the last issue of **Vates** I mentioned a few of the problems Latin poets face in attempting to find an audience for their verses [*Verba Inaudita*, IV:40]. It is all very well to write *scribendi sui causa*, for one’s own pleasure, but I worried there that no species of writing can thrive wholly without a readership. One possible outlet for new



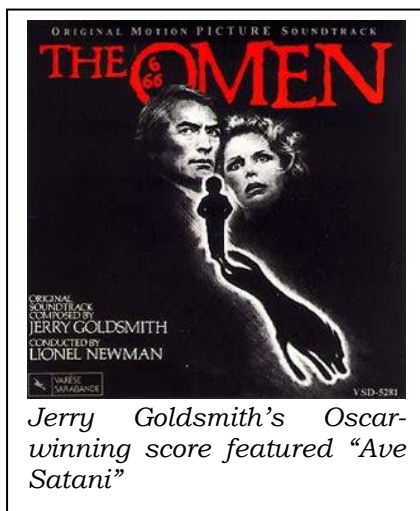
Horace the songwriter?

Latin writing which, I think, has not been sufficiently explored and exploited by modern Latinists, is music.

The connection between Latin verse and music is ancient and

intimate. Horace may very well have written his *carmina* with musical accompaniment in mind¹. The hymns and sequences of the medieval church were all written to be sung, they form a central part of the classical music repertoire and to this day composers continue to set those texts – the *Requiem Mass*, for example, has received modern settings from composers as diverse as Benjamin Britten (*War Requiem*, 1962), György Ligeti (1965), and Andrew Lloyd Webber (1982) among many others². Alongside the sacred, secular Latin also features occasionally – most famously, perhaps, in Carl Orff’s setting of the ‘goliardic’ poems of the *Carmina Burana* (1936).

Latin also crops up fairly frequently in Hollywood. The opening *O Fortuna* from Orff’s cantata has appeared on the soundtracks of several movies, including *Excalibur* (1981) and *Natural Born Killers* (1994). But there are also original musical settings, for example the two Latin songs that featured in Kenneth Branagh’s films of



Henry V (1989) and *Hamlet* (1996). For the former, composer Patrick Doyle wrote (and sang) a setting of the Vulgate Psalm 113, *Non nobis, Domine*; for the latter the same composer wrote the song *In Pace*, an adaptation of the Vulgate’s *Diligite iustitiam* (from the *Liber Sapientiae Solomonis*, 1.i), sung on the soundtrack by Plácido Domingo³. Other prominent examples of Latin music in the movies are Jerry Goldsmith’s Oscar-winning score for *The Omen* (1976), which boasted the newly written and truly diabolical

hymn *Ave Satani*, and Basil Poledouris’ epic score for *Conan the Barbarian* (1982), which features several choral pieces with new Latin texts in similar style to Orff’s cantata.

Latin occasionally gets an airing in popular music too. Folk-rock group Steeleye Span got to Number 14 in the UK charts in 1973 with their version of the medieval carol *Gaudete*⁴. A year earlier, singer Cat Stevens had included an original Latin song, *O Caritas*, on his album *Catch Bull at Four* (1972):

O Caritas (Cat Stevens, Andreas Toumazis, Jeremy Taylor)

*Hunc ornatum mundi nolo perdere
video flagrare omnia res
audio clamare homines*

*nunc exstinguitur mundi et astrorum lumen
 nunc concipitur mali hominis crimen
 tristitate et lacrimis gravis est dolor
 de terraeque maribus magnus est clamor
 O caritas, o caritas nobis semper sit amor
 nos perituri mortem salutamus
 sola resurgit vita.*

'I don't want to lose the harmony of the universe I see all things ... burning, I hear men ... shouting. Now is the light of the world and the stars going out. Now does the blame for the disaster fall upon men. Grief is heavy with sadness and tears. Great is the noise from the earth and the seas. O love, O love be with us always. We who will perish salute death. Life alone goes on'⁵.

Several lines suggest an accentual trochaic rhythm (e.g. ***Hunc ornatum mundi nolo perdere***), and there are rhyming syllables at the end of most lines (*res / homines; lumen / crimen* etc.). There is also a classical allusion to the gladiators' salute (*nos morituri te salutant*) in *nos perituri mortem salutamus*, but this is not poetry in the classical quantitative sense. Nor need it be: the point here is not to provide a poem for recitation, rather to fit words to a song melody. This type of composition goes back at least as far as the first centuries of Christianity, as Dag Norberg points out when speaking of the *Te Deum* hymn:

This poetry in prose had nothing in common with Greco-Latin versification. It is not possible to confine the structure of the verse within any particular form ... this poetry was written to be sung⁶.

In similar vein, Irish singer Enya has also recorded songs in Latin, all written by lyricist Roma Ryan, for example:

Afer Ventus (Roma Ryan)

*Mare Nubium. Umbriel.
 Mare Imbrium. Ariel.
 Et itur ad astra.
 Et itur ad astra.
 Mare Vndarum. Io. Vela.*



Enya's bestselling Shepherd Moons

Mirabile dictu. Mirabilia.
Mirabile visu. Mirabilia.
Et itur ad astra.
Et itur ad astra.
Sempervirent. Rosetum.

Afer Ventus. Zephyrus.
Volturnus. Africus.
Et itur ad astra.
Et itur ad astra.
Etesiarum. Eurus.

Refrain:
Suus cuique mos. Suum cuique.
Meus mihi, suus cuique carus.
Memento, terrigena.
Memento, vita brevis.
*Meus mihi, suus cuique carus*⁷.

‘Sea of clouds. Umbriel. Sea of showers. Ariel. And that is the way to the stars. Sea of waves. Io. Vela. Wonderful to say. Wonderful things. Wonderful to see. Wonderful things. And that is the way to the stars. They are evergreen. A rose-garden. African wind. Zephyr. South-east wind. African. And that is the way to the stars. Of the etesian winds. The east wind. Their own habit for each. To each their own. To me mine, there is own is dear to each. Remember, earth-born, remember, life is short.’

This is a long way from classical quantitative verse. The repeated *Et itur ad astra* might be a paraphrase of Virgil’s *sic itur ad astra* (*Aeneid*, 9.641), but its familiarity as a Latin tag casts doubt on any deliberate allusion. Likewise the refrain phrase *Memento, vita brevis* is a variant of the commonplace *memento mori* idea. Much of the rest is almost stream-of-consciousness in its association of ideas. In the first stanza: the *maria* of the moon, Io, one of Jupiter’s moons, and the constellation Vela; all are astronomical phenomena linked with the title of the album from which this song is taken (*Shepherd Moons*, which is itself an astronomical term for moons that orbit near planets with rings⁸). In the second, *mirabile* seems to have suggested *mirabilia*; while the otherwise puzzling line

Sempervirent. Rosetum, may serve as a transition to the earthly 'wonders', the winds of the final stanza.

Those whose musical tastes are more hard-hitting than Enya might be fascinated to discover that Italian 'Black Metal' band Nazgul (the name, of course, taken from *The Lord of the Rings*) released in 2002 a Tolkien-esque concept album entitled *De Expugnatione Elfmuth*, the delightful subject-matter of which is the triumph of the Dark Lord's orcs and ogres over the puny forces of men and elves, with lyrics entirely in Latin⁹. One example will suffice to give a flavour of the whole:



Elficidium (Thornset and Zakrathor)

*Silva gravida est uligine sicut frons elforum qui
Percipiunt obscuram presentiam, statim murmur
Foliarum aperit veritatem ... duodecim hominum
Horribilium sine deo.*

*Terror serpit inter perturbatos elfos, qui non
Habent tempus fugiendi.*

*Monstra in iugula candida impetum faciunt
Laminis aspersis sanguinem concreto, stuprant
Honestas virgines ante earum filios, lacernat
Ventres elforum.*

*Igitur evanescunt cum strepitu inter arbores
Percussas pavore cum tropaeis funebribus...
Auriculis elficis.*

The forest is full of dampness like the elves' face heads who perceive an obscure presence, suddenly a rustle of leaves shows the truth ... A dozen of abominable beings without god. Panic spreads among the lost elves who have no time to escape ... The ogres threw themselves on their candid throats with blades soiled with blood, they rape the virtuous women in front of their children they tear the elderly's abdomens and smash men's heads. They disappear noisily, among the horrified trees, with a macabre trophy ... Elfic ears⁹.

Admittedly they may not have created the poetical equivalent of a silk purse from all those mangled elvish ears, but only a serious curmudgeon would not applaud the quite literally bloody-minded

ambition of songwriting and performing duo Thornset and Zakrathor (*sic!*).

A more genteel new Latin lyric is the *Hymnus Latinus Europae*, written in 2003 by Austrian professor Dr. Peter Roland and his colleague Peter Diem. This was their laudable attempt to provide the EU with its very own ‘national’ anthem – naturally enough composed in the original single-European language. The lyric is tailored to fit the melody of ‘Ode to Joy’ from Beethoven’s Ninth Symphony, which (with the original text by Schiller) is the official anthem of the European Union. The *stellae ... aureae* of the final stanza is a reference to the EU flag. Otherwise this is a straightforward exhortatory piece as befits a national anthem:

Hymnus Latinus Europae (Peter Roland, Peter Diem)

*Est Europa nunc unita
et unita maneat;
una in diversitate
pacem mundi augeat.*

*Semper regant in Europa
fides et iustitia
et libertas populorum
in maiore patria.*

*Cives, floreat Europa,
opus magnum vocat vos
stellae signa sunt in caelo
aureae, quae iungant nos.*

‘Europe is united now, United may it remain; Our unity in diversity May contribute to world peace. May there forever reign in Europe Faith and justice And freedom for its people In a bigger motherland. Citizens, Europe shall flourish, A great task calls on you. Golden stars in the sky are The symbols that shall unite us’¹⁰.

Whatever their poetical merits – if it is even right to consider song lyrics as poetry – we can safely say one thing about these miscellaneous pieces: they have reached a far greater audience than any of the neo-Latin poetry that we typically feature in **Vates**. Enya’s *Shepherd Moons* album alone has sold in excess of thirteen million copies¹¹. We might reasonably doubt that many music fans are thereby stimulated to explore neo-Latin poetry as a result of

listening to a Latin song by their favourite artist. Nonetheless, the very existence of such songs indicates an appetite for Latin among both singers and their audiences. And given the association of Latin with classical music, it is a source of surprise that pop musicians seem to have more eagerly embraced new Latin texts than their classical counterparts. Some time ago I asked composer Debbie Wiseman, who has experience of setting texts such as the Latin Mass, if she had ever composed music for any new Latin verse. She replied:

I've never been asked to set a newly written piece of Latin verse to music ... The truth is that if I could find a home for this sort of work then I would definitely love to write it, but serious commissions for the concert hall are few and far between, and I'm more likely to be asked to compose a string quartet or a small chamber music piece. It is an interesting thought though, and there might even be an opportunity for setting Latin text for a solo singer in a film score, if the setting and subject matter was suitable. It's certainly something that I'll keep in mind for the future¹².

Ian Stephens, another composer with experience of Mass settings, after admitting that he 'would readily agree' if asked to set a new Latin text, had a practical point to make:

I've found that pronunciation of Latin varies a great deal in different choirs, and in singing different repertoire ... A work setting a new text in Latin might do well to include a pronunciation guide¹³.

Given the right circumstances, then, it seems that composers are willing¹⁴. So where are all the Latin lyricists eager to have their verses set to music?

Notes:

1. The case for 'Horace the Songwriter' is made in Lyons, S. (2007) *Horace's Odes and the Mystery of Do-Re-Mi*, Aris & Philips: Oxford.

2. 'The oldest Christian religious service was not at all lacking in songs or poems', Norberg (1958), *An Introduction to the Study of Medieval Latin Versification*, translated by G. C. Roti and J. de la Chapelle Skubly (2004), Washington DC: The Catholic University of America Press, p. 156. The tradition of setting Latin hymns to

music continues with contemporary composers such as Cecilia McDowall, <http://www.ceciliamcdowall.co.uk/> and Carl Rütti, <http://www.ruettimusic.ch/>

3. The Latin lyric for *In Pace* was adapted by Russell Jackson. For Patrick Doyle's filmography, see his official site, http://www.patrickdoylemusic.com/Patrick_Doyle_Music/Home.html.

Doyle also used excerpts from the *Dies Irae* sequence in the horror movie *Needful Things* (1993).

4. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gaudete>

Advice for Beginners

A semi-regular column (hopefully!) in which contributors are invited to offer nuggets of helpful advice for aspiring Latin poets

In this instalment, Mark Walker suggests ...

Start with Trochees

Trochaic verse, an extremely popular form in medieval Latin, is a great place to begin composing in Latin. It has an easy-to-understand rhythm and uses rhyming line endings, hence closely resembles English vernacular poetry. Unlike the quantitative verse of the classical Roman poets, this is all about word **stress**.

A *trochee* is a two-beat metrical 'foot' with the stress accent falling on the first beat (so, "dum-de, dum-de, dum-de, dum-de"). Contrast with an *iamb*, in which the stress falls on the second beat. Since Latin generally dispenses with the particles we rely on so much in English ('a', 'the' etc.) it tends to fall more naturally into a trochaic rhythm. In English, by contrast, an iambic rhythm is more common, e.g. the classic iambic pentameter of Shakespeare: "a horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse" ("di-dum, di-dum, di-dum" etc.).

Perhaps the best and most famous example of Latin trochaic verse is the magnificent *Dies Irae* of the Requiem Sequence. Each highly characteristic stanza consists of three rhyming lines of four trochaic feet each (the underlined syllables are stressed):

Dies irae, dies illa

Solvet saeclum in favilla
Teste David cum Sibylla

[“Day of wrath, that day / When the world will dissolve into
ashes / As predicted by David and the Sibyll.”]

For anyone who has wrestled with the intricacies of quantitative verse it will be a relief to notice first of all that word stress is not subject to the same rules as syllable weight. So, the final –es and –ae of *Dies irae* are unstressed, though they would both count as ‘heavy’ syllables in quantitative verse. (The word *dies* actually scans as an iamb in quantitative verse, but here it is a trochee). Nor does the syllable ending the word *Solv*et become stressed, despite being followed by another consonant beginning the next word *saec*lum. Nor, for that matter, is the final syllable of *saec*lum elided even though it ends in an ‘m’ and is followed by a word beginning with a vowel. Here word stress is king.

You might notice a preponderance of two-syllabled words. There’s a good reason for that. In a typical two-syllable Latin word the stress accent falls on the first syllable. Hence *Dies irae*, *dies illa*. So the simplest way to create a trochaic line is to stick with two-syllabled words. Fortunately, many basic Latin nouns and verbs are just such words – making this a verse form that even students with only a rudimentary vocabulary can use very early on in their Latin studies. It’s a fun way for teachers to encourage Latin composition: give students a list of words they already know and see what they can create.

Things get even more interesting if you use three-syllable words. These are stressed on their second syllable if it has a long vowel or is followed by two consonants. So, in the *Dies irae* above we have stress accents on the second syllable of *fav*illa and *Sibylla. Hence, too, *Fort*una in the opening of the famous *Carmina Burana*:*

O Fortuna,
velut luna

[“O Fortune, like the moon ...”]

Observe how the opening ‘O’ is necessary to establish the trochaic rhythm. The poet provides variety in the next few lines:

statu variabilis
semper crescis
aut decrescis

vita detestabilis

[“changeable in state, you are always waxing or waning, detestable life”]

Here we have straightforward two-foot trochees (*semper crescis ... aut decrescis*) alternating with longer lines that have an extra syllable at the end (or rather, are missing a final syllable to complete an additional foot) – *statu variabilis ... vita detestabilis* – both of which consist of three-and-a-half feet. Such ‘hanging’ lines are technically known as *catalectic*. Note also how those four lines rhyme in the pattern A B B A.

Thanks to the inflected endings of Latin nouns and adjectives, such rhymes are relatively easy to achieve. Latin verb participles are especially helpful. Here’s how the poet of the *Dies Irae* (probably Thomas of Celano, 1190-1260) uses future participles in the second stanza:

*Quantus tremor est futurus
quando iudex est venturus
cuncta stricte discussurus.*

[“What dread there will be / When the Judge shall come / To judge all things severely.”]

And he repeats the same trick a little later on:

*Quid sum miser tunc dicturus,
quem patronum rogaturus,
cum vix iustus sit securus?*

[“What then am I, wretch, to say / What advocate am I to ask to defend me / When the just may hardly be secure?”]

One final example – perfect participles this time. The terrifying fate awaiting the damned described in a brilliant ablative absolute clause. These are the lines so memorably discussed in *Amadeus*, as the dying Mozart asks Salieri to transcribe his immortal musical setting:

Confutatis maledictis

*flammis acribus addictis,
voca me cum benedictis.*

[“When the damned have been confounded / And sacrificed
to the bitter flames / Call me with the blessed.”]

Powerful stuff, powerfully conveyed. Notice particularly the double-stresses in the four-syllabled *confutatis maledictis ... benedictis*.

So, if you are a little put off by the complexities of classical quantity, or even if you want to add some spice to your Latin versifying, try composing a few trochaic lines. If you play around with the rhythm and rhyme (couplets, triplets, catalectic lines, alternating rhymes etc. etc.) you can create remarkable effects using even a basic vocabulary.

* * *

Advice for Beginners

A semi-regular column (hopefully!) in which contributors offer
nuggets of helpful advice for aspiring Latin poets

Vowels have length while syllables have quantity, remarks Editor Mark Walker

A great source of potential confusion for those who first encounter quantitative Latin verse is the distinction between vowel length and syllable quantity, which is all too often blurred or ignored in textbooks, especially older ones. We are told cavalierly of long and short syllables, and vowels that mysteriously become ‘long by position’, when what is actually meant is heavy and light syllables (their quantity) as distinct from the natural (and unvarying) length of vowels.

Vowel length is a matter of pronunciation. Vowels have a certain fixed length, as in the ‘o’ of ‘dog’ (short vowel) or the ‘o’ of ‘bone’ (long vowel). A short vowel is pronounced as a short vowel wherever it is placed in a line of quantitative verse. It never magically becomes long ‘by position’.

Quantity on the other hand is a matter of syllable structure. Heavy syllables are those containing long vowels or ones that are ‘closed’

by a consonant followed immediately by a new syllable that begins with another consonant (with some exceptions). These heavy syllables were thought of as taking longer to pronounce and therefore tended to receive more stress when spoken. Syllables are therefore said to have weight, and this is frequently related to whether they are stressed or unstressed. As W.S. Allen noted as long ago as 1965 in his definitive study of Latin pronunciation, *Vox Latina*:

‘As length is a property of vowels, quantity is a property of syllables; and although there are connexions between length and quantity in Latin, the two properties are to be clearly distinguished ... the reader should be warned that even in some current standard works there is considerable confusion between syllabic quantity and vowel length – a confusion for which the Greek grammarians are ultimately responsible.’
[Chapter 6]

That confusion persists even today. David J. Califf’s *Latin Meter and Verse Composition* (Anthem Press, 2002), for example, talks of both long and short vowels as well as long and short syllables. In his rules for determining the quantity of syllables he states, ‘A vowel followed by two consonants or a double consonant ... is generally long’; but immediately after, ‘The final syllable of a word ending in a vowel and a single consonant is lengthened if the next word begins with a consonant’; then, ‘But a short open vowel at the end of a word is generally not lengthened ...’ [Section II, p.6]

But vowels are not lengthened – rather, it is the syllable weight that changes. A short vowel remains short, even if followed by two consonants.

- Vowels have length – long or short – which is a matter of pronunciation and does not change, regardless of position in a line of verse
- Syllables have quantity – heavy or light – and it is the specific pattern of syllables, determined by various rules, in a line of verse that defines the metre.

The tension between the syllable-based metrical pattern of a line and the rhythm of natural word stress informs much quantitative verse. Take, for example, the first line of the *Aeneid*. As written below, the top numbers are the six metrical feet; the second line

represents the syllabic pattern of the hexameter line (dactyls and trochees); long vowels are marked with a macron over each letter:

1	2	3	4	5	6
- ~ ~	- ~ ~	- -	- -	- ~ ~	- -

arma uirumque canō, Trōiae quī prīmus ab ōrīs,

Notice how the word stress of *uirum* is shifted from the first to the second syllable by the addition of *-que*, i.e. the second syllable now becomes heavy and so carries the word stress. But the vowel ‘u’ is not therefore pronounced as a long vowel.

The metrical beat (*ictus*) always falls on the first (heavy) syllable of each of the six feet. In this example the beat coincides with heavy stressed syllables at the beginning of the first, second, fifth and sixth feet. But in the middle of the line – *cano, Troiae qui* – the stressed syllable where the word accent falls is not in synch with the beat of the verse¹. This is what musicians call syncopation. And for the same reasons that musicians do it, Latin poets also do it. Apart from the first beat of the first foot, where a heavy syllable is always required, and in the cadence² of the fifth and sixth feet, where stress accent and metre frequently coincide, this ‘syncopation’, this offsetting of word stress against the metrical beat, is entirely typical of much Latin verse.

1. The stress accent of a two-syllable word falls on the first syllable, whether it is heavy or light, hence *cano* is stressed on its first syllable even though the final ‘o’ is a long vowel, therefore making the second syllable heavy.
2. The cadential ending of the hexameter is a subject for another time!

* * *

Advice for Beginners

In this instalment of the semi-regular column, editor Mark Walker takes a brief look at hexameter endings

In the ‘Advice for Beginners’ in *Vates* #8 I mentioned the relation between word stress (pronunciation) and metrical *ictus* (the pulse or rhythm of a line). At the beginning of a hexameter line stress

and *ictus* must coincide (since the hexameter begins on a heavy syllable), but elsewhere matters are more at the poet's discretion. In the middle of the line rhythmic pulse and word stress can and frequently do fall out of synch – musicians call this syncopation, and just as in a good jazz tune it's all about playing 'off the beat'. Typically, however, this tension is resolved in the final two feet, as metrical rhythm and the stress accent of the words at last come together in an audibly satisfying cadence (again, the parallel with music is clear). This cadence is known as an Adonic – a dactyl followed by a spondee (or a trochee – the final syllable regarded as 'heavy') The Adonic also plays a role in anapestic verse, and features as the finale of a Sapphic stanza. In English the rhythm and stress are as in the phrase 'strawberry jam-jar', *dum-diddy dum-dum*.

Let's take once again the famous opening line of the *Aeneid* for example:

1	2	3	4	5	6
- ~ ~	- ~ ~	- -	- -	- ~ ~	- -
<i>arma virumque canō, Trōiae quī prīmus ab ōrīs</i>					

Here, word stress and accent are 'syncopated' in feet 2, 3 and 4, where the stressed first syllable of *cano* falls 'off the beat' at the end of the second foot, as does *Troiae* in the third and *qui* in the fourth. Notice that Virgil could have swapped the words *Troiae* and *qui* around – *qui Troiae* – but if he had done so the stress-accent and beat in the fourth foot would have come together, something he presumably wanted to avoid. The line ends on that resonant dactyl-spondee 'strawberry jam-jar' (the primary stress accents are in bold):

prī - mus ab | **ōr** - īs

Remember Classical Latin verse doesn't rhyme, so this Adonic cadence provides readers/listeners with an audible signal that we have reached the end of the line. Most examples of Classical hexameters will conform to this pattern, which is typically achieved by ending with either a three-syllabled (stress on the second syllable) or a two-syllabled (stress on the first syllable) word, both of which can be seen in the opening of Lucretius' *De Rerum Natura*:

Aeneadum genetrix, hominum diuomque uoluptas,

alma Venus, caeli subter labentia signa

(DRN, I.1-2i)

Where the stress-accent and *ictus* fall:

5 6
(*diu*-) | **om**que uol- | -**up** - tas

(*lab*-) | **ent**tia | **sig** - na

Notice the addition of *-que* turns *diuom* (an archaic genitive plural) into a three-syllabled word and so shifts the stress to the second syllable (same goes for Virgil's *uirumque* above). But Lucretius being Lucretius, his work is chock full of (by later Augustan standards anyway) exceptional usages such as big pentasyllabic endings that fill both fifth and sixth feet – e.g. *composituras*, *exorerentur*, *simplicitate* – or monosyllables for the final foot like *quae sunt*, *per se*, *ab re*. He is also happy to finish a line with such things as *quae cum animi ui* (I.159), with its elision of the first (stressed) syllable of **animi**:

| quae c(um) anim- | -i ui

Less exceptionally, Augustan Latin poets (including Virgil) could and did sometimes break away from the Adonic to introduce spondees into the fifth foot – the *Aeneid* has lines ending with **comitatu** and **ululatu**. But Lucretius has many more such 'heavy' four-syllabled words: examples include **subsido**, **perturbentur**, **obbrutescat** and **sustentare** – though he was, we should remember, struggling to express some pretty knotty technical issues in verse form. But these are the kind of thing that later poets generally avoided – let us take, by way of a *Sortes Nasonianae*, the regular Adonic endings of the first four lines of the *Metamorphoses*:

dicere | **formas**
(*mu*-) | -**tastis** et | **illas**
(*or*-) | -**igine** | **mundi**
tempora | **carmen**

Easy to see why Ovid is the textbook darling of metrical correctness. But to conclude with one more exceptional modern example. Way back in [Vates #2](#) Dirk Sacré first introduced us to the work of Prof. Joseph Tusiani (see also this issue's Letters page),

whose unique ear for the musicality of Latin can produce a line like this:

fulgere oh pergat super umbras, umbras, umbras

Repetition of three remarkable heavy spondees in a row is something you won't find in Ovid!

To conclude with advice for actual composition: generally speaking the Adonic has proved to be so satisfying a termination that you will doubtless find yourself actively wanting to use it *most* of the time – so you will be looking for patterns that match the *dum-diddy dum-dum* rhythm, ensuring that word stress falls on the first beat of both fifth and sixth feet and frequently concluding each line with a two-syllabled (stress on first syllable) or three-syllabled (stress on second syllable) word. Just as Baroque composers like Vivaldi and Handel finished a phrase with *dum-di, dum-di daaaah*, or a guitarist like Eric Clapton throws in that distinctive run at the end of a 12-bar blues, the Adonic is the ideal way to round off your line. Exceptions both in Classical and Neo-Latin verse demonstrate that it's not a hard-and-fast rule; it is rather a useful ready-made weapon in your compositional arsenal.

- ❖ More technical analysis can be found in D.S. Raven's *Latin Metre* (Faber & Faber, 1965) Sections #69-76
- ❖ G.B Nussbaum's *Vergil's Metre* (Bristol Classical Press, 1986) has some excellent guidance on word accent and rhythm

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